Blood, Guts and Becoming:
The Evolution of the Final Girl.

Sherron Kean, B.A. (Hons).

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Introduction:
There Will Be Blood

"The image of the distressed female most likely to linger in the memory is the image of the one who did not die: the survivor, or Final Girl."

-Carol J. Clover

Men, Women and Chainsaws

"They're all the same. Some stupid killer stalking some big-breasted girl, who can't act, who is always running up the stairs when she should be running out the front door. It's insulting."

-Sidney Prescott

Scream (1996)

This thesis aims to re-evaluate the changing role and function of the Final Girl in horror film since 1974. This exploration demands both an understanding of horror film as a genre and the historical conditions that have shaped feminist and film critics' responses to them. It also demands an understanding of the changing horror audience and the ways horror film responds to its own critics. Theory and film do not exist in a vacuum, theory comments on film, film comments on theory and film comments on itself. As the two quotations that open this chapter show there is an interconnectedness between them. The Carol Clover quotation demonstrates how films develop character types that become an integral part of the genre which in turn then becomes theorised as an essential element of the genre. The quotation from *Scream* (1996), and the *Scream* film in particular, demonstrate a film commenting on its own genre. Both film and theory influence the development of film: Clover's identification of the Final Girl has led to the increasing prominence of the female survivor, as well as the development of this character away from her predictable and well-worn beginnings.

Horror films draw extreme reactions from a wide assortment of people, from both fans who immerse themselves in the culture of horror and those opposed to it. However censorship boards and religious groups are, generally, the most potent of those in opposition. This has gone on since the infancy of film and in the 1930s in the USA during the Depression "a grassroots lobbying group, the Catholic Legion of Decency, denounced what it perceived as

Hollywood's assault on traditional social and moral values in a perilous time."[1] Film, particularly those that show violence and/or sex, is held up as the cause for weakening society's decency and moral correctness. This fear and restriction follows every innovation in visual entertainment: "film censorship follows different media, so at the turn of the century when film was invented it was censored, then when TV was invented in the 50s the censor followed it, so when video was invented it was inevitable that it was going to be censored."[2] It is not just the censor who impacts on what can and cannot be seen, like the Catholic Legion of Decency, censorship movements start with complaints by those within everyday society. The detractors of the horror film have not necessarily even seen the films they wish to have banned but react to the salacious posters or titles. Though horror films are not the only subjects of these censorship calls, they seem to attract the most vitriolic attacks. This became even more evident when videos came to be in circulation. Videos allowed people to watch what they liked, when they liked from the comfort of their own homes.

Horror films are viewed as detrimental to society, underpinned by the idea that what we watch affects how we behave in the world. Horror generally deals in the darker underside of society, but with themes that often have resonance closer to home. Horror is often construed as a misogynistic genre that delights in the destruction of the female body because most of its portrayal of violence involves women. Vivian Sobchak writes "the horror film has been seen by many contemporary, psychoanalytically oriented, feminist scholars as a misogynist scenario elaborated within a patriarchal and heterosexual social formation and based on the male fear of female sexuality."[3] Due to the tendency to place women in the role of monster, as out of control and in need of being destroyed or as victims who die in a state of undress, with a male killer looming over them wielding a phallic weapon, it is usually perceived that women are not shown within horror films as anything other than destructive or weak. The view that horror films work as an expression of "a misogyny that is apparent in the killers, in the films and in the broader culture that supports the films"[4] has led to horror films as being viewed as negative and complicit representations, as a way of turning violence against women into an accepted form of entertainment without criticism. These negative images found in horror often become the focus of critics, theorists and censors at the expense of the

[1] R. Worland, *The Horror Film: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 65.
[2] *Fear, Panic and Censorship*, directed by D. Kenny (United Kingdom: Shashmedia, 2000), DVD.
[3] V. Sobchak, "The Leech Woman's Revenge: On the Dread of Ageing in a Low-budget Horror Film," last accessed December 17, 2015, http://old.cinema.ucla.edu/women/sobchack/default.html.
[4] P. Hutchings. *The Horror Film* (London: Routledge, 2004), 52.

more complex contexts in which they are presented. As the following brief history of the censorship and public reception of horror films will show, much of the opposition to horror is based on a lack of knowledge and taking the films at face value or by reputation only. The following discussion situates the contemporary horror film within its historical roots but also draws attention to the negative connotations that the genre elicits. As this thesis will show, horror can be viewed as a positive and complex genre, and one in which women feature as more than just victims; in fact they can operate as the active force of these films. Moreover, the Final Girl is a significant figure in these changes because she fulfils the roles of both survivor and hero within the horror narrative. She is more than just a victim within these films but someone who, eventually, stands up against the killer and repels or defeats him.

The fear of horror films became more evident with the invention of video players. The technology of video players and cassettes created a new wave of panic. The newspaper played a crucial "role in the video panic and its attendant campaign for statutory control of the new medium."[5] Most newspaper articles commenting on the rise in availability of video player technology encouraged an atmosphere of fear and dread and promoted the new technology as a danger to children.[6] These claims came largely from Britain, and newspapers claimed that these films corrupted, damaged and one particular newspaper story claimed that the films had actually possessed a young boy when he viewed a horror video.[7] Children were seen to be most vulnerable to the dangers of corruption through this new medium; according to the pro-censorship groups of the time children could easily buy "sadism" from the local store as easily as they could by sweets.[8] This campaign described the "rape of our children's minds" and appealed to the need to protect children and highlighted children's vulnerability to images of violence and bloodshed.[9] In the 1980s television news in the United Kingdom claimed that "40% of 5 and 6 year old children have seen a video nasty showing scenes of sadistic sex and violence horrific enough to have been seized by the police."[10]

[5] J. Petley. "'Are We Insane?' The 'Video Nasty' Moral Panic" in *Moral Panics in the Contemporary World*, ed. C. Critcher, J. Hughes, J. Petley and A. Rohloff (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 75.
[6] P. Chippendale, "How High Street Horror is Invading the Home," *The Sunday Times,* May 23, 1982.
[7] "Taken Over" *The Daily Mail*, August 4, 1983.
[8] *Fear, Panic and Censorship*, directed by D. Kenny (United Kingdom: Shashmedia, 2000), DVD.
[9] Ibid.
[10] "Dear Mr Censor," *Time Shift*, episode 6 aired September 29, 2011 (London: BBC Four), Television Broadcast.

Within this moral panic triggered by the rise of video technology was a blurring of reality and image. Events that took place in the real world, such as the rise in youth violence and crime,[11] were linked to these films, which in turn led to tighter restrictions being placed on these videos. "The Video Recordings Act – the so-called 'Video Nasties Bill' – which instituted a system of censorship and certification for home video far in excess of anything inflicted upon theatrical films,"[12] the control that censors had over the viewing tendencies of the audiences of the time was undermined by the fact that people could buy these cassettes at their local shop and the distribution of these films was not under the censor's control. The focus on the home and children heightened fears surrounding this new medium. "Mutilations of bodies. Cannibalism. Gang rape. That is what a video nasty is,"[13] was how Graham Bright, a British MP of the time who introduced the Video Recordings act in 1984, described what makes a video nasty. As this quotation demonstrates, in the eyes of the politicians supporting the act and the media, the acts on screen film narratives were treated as if they were real threats.

The rise of video was also thought to be a factor in the demise of cinema going, so this new technology was not only seen as a threat to the moral and cultural fabric of society but also to the cinema industry itself. "Hollywood held back its biggest titles, and so an unregulated rental market was flooded with cheap imports: Italian zombie films and American slashers bought up and distributed by enterprising one or two-man operations."[14] These videos did not adhere to the standards set by the censorship boards of the time and could not be regulated at the beginning of the video era. This influx of independent, non-Hollywood films and directors could have been seen as a positive thing. It gave previously unknown directors an audience and allowed them to have access to a market that had previously been cornered by the Hollywood industry. However, these aspects of the video market were suppressed under the view that these films were considered exploitative and threatening to the dominance of Hollywood within the cinema industry. "The head of the Motion Picture Association of America told a 1982 hearing: 'The VCR is to the American film producer... as the Boston Strangler is to the woman home alone,'"[15] a view that highlights the threat that the video

[11] R. Garrett, "Gender, Sex, and the Family" in *British Cultural Identities,* eds. M. Storry and P. Childs (London: Routledge, 2002), 127.
[12] K. Newman, *Nightmare Movies: Horror on the Screen since the 1960s* (London, Bloomsbury, 2011), 276.
[13] *Fear, Panic and Censorship*, directed by D. Kenny (United Kingdom: Shashmedia, 2000), DVD.
[14] L. Phelan, "Film Censorship: How Moral Panic led to a Mass Ban of 'Video Nasties,'" *The Independent*, July 13, 2014.
[15] Ibid.

market was imagined to be by those in Hollywood. The advent of the video heralded for Hollywood producers an omen of doom and certainly not a new avenue with which to gain a bigger audience. The Video Recordings Act was only enacted in the United Kingdom,[16] however, its implications were felt through distribution channels, communication between American directors and the censor boards and fan culture.[17]

The gore film, a subgenre of horror which focuses on the graphic depiction of the destruction of the body, is best defined "in terms of its repetitive structure and its taste for excess"[18] and was viewed as particularly dangerous. Prior to the Gore subgenre horror film producers had been "intent on not offending their audiences" and as such had minimised the "images of bloodshed and dismemberment."[19] The Gore film soon repositioned the horror genre as a site for visceral images and emerged largely from Italian and American directors. With *The House by the Cemetery* (1981) the market was inundated with the Gore film, examples of which include directed by Lucio Fulci and *The Driller Killer* (1979) directed by Abel Ferrara. The moral outcry surrounding these films was often based on their covers, as previously noted. The covers of these films were often deployed for shock and audience draw that sometimes had very little to do with the content of the films. "The boxes featured wonderfully lurid artwork: frequently making promises to the gore-hungry that the films didn't keep,"[20] and these misleading boxes fostered the cries for censorship. *Driller Killer* (1979) was not one of those films with a misleading box but it does provide an example of how these films came under scrutiny based on their gore-heavy posters and video covers. *Driller Killer* was advertised by its UK distributors, Vipco, with a campaign involving a full page ad depicting a drill going into a person's head. The complaints that followed this ad were largely from people who had never seen the film but who were outraged by this advertisement.[21] The gore or splatter film, which has influenced the development of other subgenres such as the slasher and body-horror, could be considered the great grandfather of torture porn, and it caused the loudest outcry largely due to its representation of bodies being penetrated, knives slashing bodies open, the copious amounts of blood used sometimes in lieu

[16] Ibid.
[17] *Fear, Panic and Censorship*, directed by D. Kenny (United Kingdom: Shashmedia, 2000), DVD.
[18] R. Moine, *Cinema Genre*, trans. A. Fox and H. Radner (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), 139.
[19] B. S. Sapolosky, & Molitor, F., "Content Trends in Contemporary Horror Films" in J.B Weaver & R. Tamborini (eds.), *Horror Films: Current Research on Audience Preferences and Reactions* (New York: Routledge,2009), 33.
[20] L. Phelan, "Film Censorship: How Moral Panic led to a Mass Ban of 'Video Nasties,'" *The Independent*, July 13, 2014.
[21] N. Johnstone, *Abel Ferrara: The King of New York* (London: Omnibus Press, 1999), 13.

of plot and their high levels of violence.[22] This violence was seen to be corrupting of youth who could watch these films as much as they liked in their own homes thanks to the home video recorder. The artistic merit of these videos is also rather debatable, as a recent newspaper article reminds us that the Italian horror films in particular that flooded the market at this time were "wearyingly derivative, as the interchangeable titles suggest (pick any combination of the words "zombie", "cannibal", "apocalypse", "blood" and "dead" and it's probably been made)."[23] However, some notable directors and films made their appearance during this period. Meir Zarchi's *I Spit on Your Grave* (1978) and Wes Craven's *Last House on The Left* (1972) were both labelled as video nasties but have been influential on the development of contemporary horror films. The films that have proven in later decades to have been influential included aspects of social commentary around their gore filled scenes,[24] reflecting the issues of the day while still making them appealing for the horror viewing public. For example, *Last House on The Left* analysed the nature of violence and how "violence degrades everyone involved, victim and victimiser, just and unjust,"[25] a sentiment that is still a valid commentary today. The messages that these films contained were overshadowed by the focus on their blood-filled and violent scenes.

As mentioned above the Video Nasties censorship only took place on a large scale in the United Kingdom. Like most cases of prohibition, the banning of these films did nothing but make them more desirable than if they had not been brought to the attention of a much broader audience through the media coverage. The thrill of watching the film became the thrill of something forbidden. Horror is in any case a film genre that frequently deals with the taboo and when censorship bans certain films they in turn also become taboo, regardless of content or value and these preconceptions are often extended to those who view them. Fans of the genre are considered to be either not very intelligent or dangerous, particularly male fans who must watch horror to live out their misogynistic tendencies.[26] Strong female characters often appear within the narrative of horror films but the strength of these characters is often overlooked or ignored because of the negative connotations associated with the horror film.

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[22] *Fear, Panic and Censorship*, directed by D. Kenny (United Kingdom: Shashmedia, 2000), DVD.
[23] S. Rose, "Who's Nasty Now?," *The Guardian,* September 9, 2005.
[24] Ibid.
[25] K. Newman, *Nightmare Movies: Horror on the Screen since the 1960s* (London, Bloomsbury, 2011), 78.
[26] B. Cherry, 'Refusing to Refuse To Look' in *Identifying Hollywood's Audiences: Cultural Identity and the Movies,* ed. M. Stokes and R Maltby (London: British Film Institute, 1999), 187.

Development within the genre or a new means of creating or watching horror triggers panic because they become unknown entities that must be controlled so that the potential dangers on society of these innovations can be circumvented. Horror films "are an easy target for groups who wish to find a concrete example of what they see as the decline of moral values or good taste."[27] The Video Nasty era is probably the best-known and well documented manifestation of moral panic surrounding horror films. The classification certificate was supposed to combat the threat that video posed and the horror titles released at this time were not the only ones to spark this decision; action films thought to have an excess of violence also contributed to this decision.[28] The classification of videos led to films that had already been released "being seized from video hire shops and prosecutions under the Obscene Publications Act."[29] The chief film censor of 1975 to 1999, James Ferman, said: "you can advise but once it is in the home it is the responsibility of the parents to regulate their children's viewing and some parents care and some don't."[30] These films led to law enforcement and government bodies attempting to curb the danger they were perceived to present as if they were living, breathing criminals who wished harm on families.

Panic is what is created out of new mediums and the reactions of government bodies, news media and lobby groups to innovations in technology. Yet as noted above this panic and the subsequent illicit nature of these films can create desire to see them. This panic either pulls fans closer to the genre, or it has the opposite effect and people are repulsed, disgusted and in opposition to it. The focus given to horror films from media campaigns like the Video Nasties era heightens the negative aspects of the genre, such as violence to women, while ignoring aspects that could be considered positive and unique. One of the more positive aspects of the genre is the focus of this thesis and that is the female hero, or Final Girl. The fact that women are the primary victim within horror is often the aspect that is highlighted in the media, to the extent that the figure of the female hero is largely overlooked. Yet she is a crucial aspect of particular horror genres. She has her origins in the slasher genre which has been considered to be "by and large beyond the purview of the respectable (middle-aged,

[27] B. Cherry, *Horror* (London, Routledge, 2009), 207.
[28] "Dear Mr Censor," *Time Shift*, episode 6 aired September 29, 2011 (London: BBC Four), Television Broadcast.
[29] B. Cherry, *Horror* (London, Routledge, 2009), 207.
[30] Ibid.

middle-class) audience."[31] Like the Video Nasties these films have been considered to be only enjoyable by those that have secret ill intentions or are not very intelligent.[32] The fixation on the negative potential implications of the genre, and its position as low brow entertainment, sometimes makes it seem without worth or merit. This results in progressive aspects being ignored and the value that can be found in such films, such as catharsis, safe exposure to the abject and the presence of an active female hero, kept hidden from view. As Clover writes it is the low budget nature of these films that "make it such a transparent source for (sub)cultural attitudes towards sex and gender."[33] The nature of the slasher film allows for the exposure of social and cultural attitudes to be revealed starkly as opposed to being hidden behind artistry. The Final Girl, for Clover, is one particular place where slasher films highlight how gender is blurred within the narratives of these films.

This thesis will argue that while Clover's positioning of the Final Girl is one of the more significant observations from early feminist film criticism, the concept needs to be re-functioned to relate to contemporary representations. However it does not alter how slasher films, and lower genres of horror play with ideas of sex and gender in a way that the higher forms of horror do not. Clover states that in the higher forms, created by directors like Brian de Palma and Alfred Hitchcock, "femininity is more conventionally elaborated and inexorably punished, and in an emphatically masculine environment" and that the idea of a female character outsmarting her assailant is unimaginable in the higher forms of the genre.[34] Whether the Final Girl is truly acting as a woman or a male stand-in[35] is to some degree beside the point, or just a feature of power and action being seen as essentially 'masculine,' as she is an active female presence, a female character who fights and survives where the male characters do not, on a screen acting as more than the love interest, side-kick or object of desire.

Film can become a scapegoat, easily blamed when people in the world commit horrible acts. Horror film is particularly susceptible to this as it is drenched in scenes of violence, murder

[31] C.J. Clover. *Men, Women and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film.* (New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1993), 21.
[32] B. Cherry, 'Refusing to Refuse To Look' in *Identifying Hollywood's Audiences: Cultural Identity and the Movies,* ed. M. Stokes and R Maltby (London: British Film Institute, 1999), 187.
[33] C.J. Clover. *Men, Women and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film.* (New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1993), 22.
[34] Ibid., 61.
[35] Ibid., 22

and blood and sometimes this appears gratuitous. Backlash against horror films does not just occur in particularly high points of world conflict and disorder, such as the Depression years or during World War Two, and not only when a new medium or genre is created, such as during the Video Nasties era, but also in order to explain, and sometimes excuse, the behaviour of people in the real world. "Because film involves sound, special effects, speech, pictures, colour for that reason it is a very powerful medium:"[36] John Beyer, of the United Kingdom National Viewers and Listeners Association sees this as one of the main reasons that film could be seen as a threat, particularly films that feature high levels of violent and/or sexual imagery. The argument follows that seeing something, whether it be fiction or reality, has a much higher impact than reading or hearing something. This is a generic explanation for the dangers and power of film and is used to distinguish the medium as more dangerous than books or radio.

In recent history the film series *Scream* has been allegedly used as a supposed source for copycat killings. A postmodern slasher film, it features two teenage boys killing their classmates. As an example of modern hysteria around what horror films can do to youth, these films have been linked to several murders by both those who perpetrated the crimes and by authority figures. In one particular case a psychologist, Madeline Levine, stated: "you need a cat to copy. In this case, *Scream* is the cat."[37] Her argument more or less parallels Beyer in that she claims "the influence of movies like *Scream* makes children angrier and desensitized…and more likely to act out a violent impulse."[38] Whether what we watch affects our actions has yet to be proven conclusively either way, so the arguments of psychologists may be valid, especially for certain disturbed individuals who could be more easily influenced by what they watch. However, we live in a world where death and destruction are seen on the evening news and children come into contact with the negative stories from the world. In fact, a study has shown that "news broadcasts likely to make you sadder and more anxious, they are also likely to exacerbate your own personal worries and anxieties."[39] Even this study, however, does not argue that viewing something, whether real or fictional, can create a disturbed individual from one who has had no inclination to such behaviour prior.

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[36] *Fear, Panic and Censorship*, directed by D. Kenny (United Kingdom: Shashmedia, 2000), DVD.
[37] J. Bowen, "2 Guilty of Scream Murder," *CBS News,* July 1, 1999, http://www.cbsnews.com/news/2-guilty-of-iscream-i-murder/
[38] Ibid.
[39] G. C. L. Davey, "The Psychological Effects of TV News," *Psychology Today*, June 19, 2012, https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/why-we-worry/201206/the-psychological-effects-tv-news.

Over a decade after the video nasty scare the same arguments are being used about why horror films are dangerous and how, because they depict horrendous crimes, they are of little value to the world. This thesis proposes that *Scream* is one of the films that does not emphasise the power and appeal of the killers but highlights the strength of the female characters and the consequences of wrong actions.

The stalker or slasher film can be described as "bloody and horribly violent, they prove deeply repulsive to some but exciting to others."[40] The slasher film is defined as a "film in which people, especially young women, are killed very violently with knives."[41] This definition highlights the sexism that is considered to be an intrinsic part of the slasher genre. Yet often the bloody violence is counterbalanced by campy humour and, as will be discussed in the first chapter. The films can be quite repetitive which adds a level of interactivity with the films for those that watch them.[42] These types of horror films are far removed from highbrow cinema and, though inspired by the likes of Hitchcock, have no artistic standing nor do they make any claims for it. "Parents and church groups, as well as feminists, have decried the films as beneath contempt and dangerous, especially because of the high level of violence they portray against women."[43] Horror films are perceived to have an inbuilt misogyny that has attracted frequent criticism. The slasher film has gained much of this attention as a genre that is filled with violent images against women.

The slasher film is different from the gore or splatter film; the slasher film was more generic than the gore film. The gore film encompassed a variety of types of horror, from zombies to serial killers, the primary focus being on gore and evisceration. On the other hand, the slasher film is predominantly the story of a serial killer who hunts a group of teenagers, usually in a suburb or some other setting that is considered safe. The genre was structured around a psycho killer who stalks a group of youths, killing them off until he, or occasionally she is stopped. Certain films banned during the Video Nasties era have influenced the development of the slasher film and *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974), in particular, will be used as the starting point for this discussion of the development of the Final Girl. In

[40] V. Dika, *Games of Terror* (New Jersey: Associated UP, 1990), 9.
[41] *Cambridge Dictionary On-Line*, s.v. "Slasher movie," http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/slasher-movie?q=slasher+movies (accessed September 18, 2015).
[42] Ibid.
[43] Ibid.

recent years *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* has not only been re-released, but also remade, and additionally, a sequel to the original 1974 film has been produced. This film has become something of a classic within the horror genre and as such garners new fans and is still being watched and talked about. The low aesthetics of the original have not diminished its appeal. Not all influences on the slasher genre have come from the low art domain. "The appointed ancestor of the slasher film is Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960),"[44] a film about a man suffering an extreme form of psychotic break who has internalised the persona of his mother and punishes himself by killing the women he voyeuristically peers at through carefully chosen peepholes. It is the starting point of the slasher genre. However the beginnings of the genre are disputed and vary depending on the theorist, or fan, but for the purpose of this thesis both *Psycho* and *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* will be discussed as influencing the development of the Final Girl. Those considered to be the forerunners of the genre were imitated and retold countless times over the years when the genre peaks, in the 1980s. Some of the imitations created innovation within the genre, like *Friday the Thirteenth* (1980), but after a while the cycle stalled and came to an end. The slasher genre during its peak in the late 1970s and 1980s enjoyed "financial success and public popularity…in 1981, *Variety* claimed that 'slasher' films (many of which featured teens) accounted for 60 percent of all U.S. releases that year, and 25 of the 50 top-grossing films of that year were 'slashers' as well."[45] These films may have had an in-built audience who knew what to expect and were not expecting much to differ from one film to the other. However some innovation was required to hold the audience's attention, whether a new special effect, a particularly innovative death or just a higher body count – something new was required of the genre. Once the innovation stopped the audiences also stopped and with that the drive to produce these films ended.

The impact of the slasher film is significant once more with a postmodern revival of the era in the 1990s, beginning with *Scream*, a film series which not only took the slasher formula but added a self-reflexive, postmodern twist. This revival, a decade on, highlights how ideas of gender have altered from the 1980s and how the presence of a female survivor who is not only capable of saving herself and others, but can also avoid the pitfalls of excusing her actions through recourse to her identification with the masculine, as Clover proposes, or

[44] C.J. Clover. *Men, Women and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film.* (New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1993), 23.
[45] T. Shary, *Generation Multiplex: The Image of Youth in American Cinema since 1980* (Austin: University of Texas UP, 2002), 137.

through her motherly instincts, as will be discussed in detail in the third chapter. The slasher genre is not so easily definable as it was at its inception in the 1970s and 1980s, as aspects of the genre have bled into other horror types as genres are always mutating and growing. Traits and character types of the slasher can be found in hybrid forms in many subgenres of horror, for example the Surviving Woman can be found in the zombie series *Resident Evil* (2002-2012). Here I will be using the term Surviving Woman to differentiate the female hero of contemporary horror from my discussion of Clover's Final Girl. The decision to use this term is based on the stronger sense of a fight between this character and the killer in contemporary horror. There is a sense that she has fought for her survival and will bear the marks of this after the conclusion of the film. The difference in the quality of the fight of the Surviving Woman and the Final Girl will be discussed in more detail in chapter four. Also the term 'Final' is no longer as applicable because often the Surviving Woman saves other characters, so she is no longer necessarily alone at the conclusion of the film.

What makes horror interesting is that it often relies on the audience to find individual films, as horror works often are not released in the cinema or with much mainstream advertising. As Clover writes, "many horror films have short theatrical runs, or no theatrical release at all, but they return their investments on videocassette."[46] This is still the case today, though now the at-home viewing can be done through DVDs, Blu-ray or downloads. Also, very few film critics engage with the genre, often deemed unworthy of attention because of its themes and its presentation. As Jody Keisner writes, "slasher films are frequently snubbed as sensationalized low-culture thrill by film reviewers and critics."[47] Those who watch them frequently find out about these films through word of mouth from other fans or their own searching. Of course there are many horror genres, some of which receive greater critical engagement and advertising. Some horror films have even gained Oscar recognition bringing their individual status above that of the average horror films. For example, *Rosemary's Baby* (1968), *The Exorcist* (1973) and *Silence of The Lambs* (1991) all have been awarded Oscars. All of these films are undeniably horror works. The first two feature possession/supernatural plots and the last is about a serial killer cannibal who is helping catch another serial killer. So horror does break through occasionally with success in the mainstream arena but these films

[46] C.J. Clover. *Men, Women and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film.* (New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1993), 6.
[47] J. Keisner, "Do You Want to Watch? A Study of the Visual Rhetoric of the Postmodern Horror Film," *Women's Studies*, 37 (2008), 412.

are often considered to be exceptions. Moreover genre labelling is sometimes indicative of a value judgement being placed upon a film and as such those horror films that are labelled "psychological thrillers can be positioned in the mainstream."[48] This is the case of *Silence of the Lambs*, which is considered horror but through the deployment of the 'thriller' label was able to win Academy awards.[49]

Slasher films are one of the more maligned subgenres of horror, but often have a very strong fan base. However many other subgenres have emerged that have rivalled the slasher as the most maligned. For example, the Torture Porn genre that will be touched on later in this thesis, and the low budget and violent nature of the Slasher genre has garnered the genre a strong following as well as negative criticism. "[D]espite the genre's increased popularity, it remained a largely denigrated and often-censured genre among both critics and scholars."[50] Christine Pinedo writes that "the slasher film is the most disreputable form of the horror film."[51] Clover continues in this vein, noting that "at the bottom of the horror heap lies the slasher (or splatter or shocker or stalker) film."[52] Though these films have "lain by and large beyond the purview of respectable criticism,"[53] critics who have examined them in any depth have seen that they say much about social, cultural and gendered issues. Thus it is important to examine these films in-depth, as they are popular and consumed by a lot of people, an indicator that they speak to concerns of viewers. They can act as a reflection, an extreme reflection, of the fears that grip society. Hence Pinedo writes that "the horror film is an exquisite exercise in coping with the terrors of everyday life,"[54] the appeal of horror is that it forces a voluntary confrontation with the fears of reality and a resolution. For example, zombies, a staple of the horror genre which has seen a significant resurgence recently with *The Walking Dead* (2010), *Resident Evil* and *World War Z* (2013), can work "as collective therapy, it shows how we will find a way to keep hoping, and to celebrate just being alive. As worst-case strategic analysis, it reveals the human future that is coming but we still cannot

[48] B. Cherry, *Horror* (London, Routledge, 2009), 33.
[49] Ibid.
[50] V. Wee. 'Resurrecting and Updating the Teen Slasher: The Case of Scream', *Journal of Popular Film and Television*, 32, no. 2 (2006), 52.
[51] I.C. Pinedo, *Recreational Terror: Women and the Pleasures of Horror Film Viewing*. (New York: State University of New York Press, 1997), 71.
[52] C.J. Clover. *Men, Women and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film.* (New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1993), 21.
[53] Ibid.
[54] I.C. Pinedo, *Recreational Terror: Women and the Pleasures of Horror Film Viewing*. (New York: State University of New York Press, 1997), 39.

yet bear to face."[55] Other horror genres deal with epidemics that threaten the security of the world, for example the link between the resurgence of vampires in books and films in the 1980s and the AIDS virus has been explored in various studies.[56] Horror films can also be a site of innovative filmmaking as "the fiscal conditions of low-budget filmmaking are such that creativity and individual vision can prosper there in ways that they may not in mainstream environments."[57] The budget restraints of these films means that much of the film is about seeing everything on the screen to create an impact in the way the film is received. While these films are often denigrated or considered to be below the eyes of respectable people, because of their reliance on violence and their low production values they can be a site of resistance, an unveiling of societal fears that other genres may sugar coat or tie up neatly with a bow in the end. This characteristic of horror will be an ongoing feature of this analysis.

This study begins in the year 1974 and the release of *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*. Although *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* alone did not create the slasher film, it clearly contributed to its development. Though not traditionally a slasher film its impact can be felt with the advent of a slasher subgenre which can be termed as Hillbilly slasher. This differs from the traditional slasher formula on a few points: the setting for most slasher films are the suburbs; the killer is usually alone and when there are so many teenagers waiting to be killed there is rarely time for cannibalism. The Hillbilly slasher is an amalgamation of the classic slasher film, with the rural setting and the twisted family and cannibalism of *Texas Chainsaw Massacre.* As Clover notes, *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* together with *Halloween* (1978) created the framework and the traits for what emerged as the slasher film and "it engendered a new spate of variations and imitations."[58] As mentioned previously, the extent of the contribution of the *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* to the development of the slasher film depends on who is analysing them and to what ends. Vera Dika, in her analysis of the slasher, or stalker films as she categorizes them, leaves out *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* and begins with *Halloween*. This is because her study, as I will go on to discuss in the first chapter, is concerned with films that adhere to a

[55] M. Vlahos, "The Civilization significance of Zombies," *The Atlantic*, June 18, 2013, http://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2013/06/the-civilizational-significance-of-zombies/276948/.
[56] A. Stephanou *Reading Vampire Gothic Through Blood: Bloodlines*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014) 61.
[57] C.J. Clover. *Men, Women and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film.* (New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1993), 5.
[58] Ibid., 24.

pretty strict guideline. For Dika, *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* differs too dramatically from what defines a slasher film and as such is beyond the purview of her analysis of the genre. I have picked *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* however because it includes the first appearance of the character who develops into the Final Girl. Moreover because contemporary horror draws strongly on the influence of both *Halloween* and *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* in the creation of their narratives. As noted above, the amalgamation of these two films has created the new subgenre of the Hillbilly slasher which moves the stalking aspect of the slasher film to the wilderness and can be seen in films, such as *Wrong Turn* (2003).

Although the films discussed by Dika and Clover in their influential works on the slasher film will be once more examined in this thesis, the central aim is to identify how the slasher film has altered and changed since the films of the 1970s and the 1980s. The films that will be the focus of this thesis were made between 2000 and 2015 and these films will be used to demonstrate what the Final Girl looks like in a post-millennial cinematic space. With the exception of a quick detour into the 1990s and the *Scream* phenomenon, the focus will be on horror films released from 2000 to 2015 which feature a female character who survives or fulfils the role of hero within the film. The chosen films will not all be easily definable as slasher films as the genre has grown to include multiple subgenres which have drawn on elements of the slasher genre but added and modified it in different ways. As Rick Altman has stated "genres were always – and continue to be – treated as if they spring full-blown from the head of Zeus."[59] The films not selected are those that focus exclusively on the supernatural or possession. Films made within these years show how much the horror genre has developed since the golden age of the slasher. Through the exploration of these films and their development I will map the progression of the Final Girl. Clover's opening chapter of *Men, Women and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film* will also be the focus of this thesis as it represents Clover's best development of the idea of the Final Girl. The other chapters in her book deal with other subgenres of the horror film, such as Possession and Rape-Revenge films which is outside the scope of this thesis. The thesis will examine how the Final Girl has progressed from a character who survives through fleeing and felling her assailant largely by chance, to a more aggressive warrior who takes the fight to her assailant. It will do this through character-type analysis, comparing the Final Girl to the Surviving

[59] R. Altmann, "A Semantic/Syntactic Approach to Film Genre," *Cinema Journal,* 23, no. 3, (1984), 6-18.

Woman, close reading and comparison of chosen films and focusing on the individual scenes that show aspects of the Surviving Woman that are in stark contrast to Clover's definition of the Final Girl. This will be done in order to examine this character from her origins to how she has evolved from Clover's Final Girl to the Surviving Woman found in contemporary films. Other critiques of Clover's theory will be explored in order to bring to the fore other perspectives on the character in these films and also to engage in how they perceive these characters and the different interpretations of her ability to survive where other characters perish.

The slasher film of the 1970s and 1980s celebrated the killer protagonist. They were the stars, as Clover states: "the killers are the fixed elements and the victims changeable."[60] These films saw the emergence of memorable horror figures such as Michael Myers (*Halloween*), Jason Voorhees (*Friday the 13th*) and Freddy Kreuger (*A Nightmare on Elm Street*). The slasher is summarised by Clover as the story of a "psycho killer who slashes to death a string of mostly female victims, one by one, until he himself is subdued or killer, usually by the one girl who has survived."[61] Clover coined the term the Final Girl to describe this one girl. Her presence for Clover was significant because it pointed to the gendered implications of horror-film viewing and was linked to her assumptions about the horror audience. For Clover, the Final Girl is represented often as a young teenage girl whom the male audience members engage with as their proxy to the action on screen.[62] This shows, at least for Clover's argument, that gender identity is not as fixed as simply the alignment of female/feminine and male/masculine, as within her argument the Final Girl is often aligned with the masculine, bringing her closer to her audience counterparts whom Clover assumes to be predominantly male.[63] This will be further explored throughout the thesis and focus will be given to how Clover highlights the masculine qualities of the Final Girl, her gender blurring and how the audience aligns with her, over her physical presence as a female.
One of the aims of this thesis is to interrogate Clover's focus on the Final Girl and how she claims they operate within the narrative as a safe point of identification for the male viewer. Clover describes the target audience for the slasher genre as being adolescent males.[64] The

[60] C.J. Clover. *Men, Women and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film.* (New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1993), 30.
[61] Ibid., 66.
[62] Ibid., 45.
[63] Ibid., 51.
[64] Ibid., 72.

young male viewer is the implied audience, "the object of its address."[65] According to Clover, the Final Girl is the body through which the male viewer can safely experience fear and pain without it being a threat to his masculinity. Within Clover's theory the Final Girl becomes this conduit through displaying masculine traits so that the male audience can recognise themselves in her, but then her obviously female body is used to distance the viewer from the scenes in which she is frightened or under threat. These young boys "cheer the killer on as he assaults the victims, then reverse their sympathies to cheer the survivor on as she assaults the killer."[66] Clover's argument is that gender identification in the slasher film is more permeable than other genres and that this indicates that male audience identification is not primarily linked to a male representative on screen. Laura Mulvey's theory of spectatorship in "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," which locks the male viewer with the male onscreen counterpart, will be engaged with more in the first chapter of this thesis, as it is one of the theories that Clover's argument for cross-sex and gender identification argues against. The Final Girl is used by Clover as an indicator of the flexibility of the identification process. Male viewers do not automatically align with male characters because as the Final Girl is the only character worthy of aligning with, the male viewer chooses her over the male killer.

Male heroes are few and far between in the horror genre. As William K. Everson writes, "the hero[…] has always been unimportant to the horror film"[67] as the emphasis was often on the villain of these films. Everson continues by highlighting an example: "David Manners, the stock hero in most Universal's early melodramas was a typically useless leading man, and was knocked out, locked up, or shutout, after only the most passive kind of resistance."[68] The notion of melodrama referred to in the passage also encompassed a number of films that are considered horror films, such as *Dracula* (1931), *The Mummy* (1932) and *The Black Cat* (1934). What Everson's example demonstrates is that male heroism never has had a place in horror. The significance of the Final Girl and the continuation of a dominance of female heroism in the horror genre suggests that women have always held a significant place within the genre. Women may not be the implied audience for a lot of horror film, but this

[65] Ibid., 23.
[66] Ibid., 72.
[67] W. K. Everson, "Horror Films" in *The Horror Film Reader*, ed. A. Silver and J. Ursini (New York: Limelight Editions, 2000), 32.
[68] Ibid.

assumption has also come under scrutiny through the work of Brigid Cherry and others.[69] Regardless of the actual veracity of the assumed audience, the idea of the male audience member being the implied audience of horror is deeply ingrained within horror film theory. So although women are not considered to be the target audience of horror, they have always been the drivers of the on-screen action. Male characters tend not to survive for very long if they attempt to save the day, or if they just happen to be in the wrong place at the wrong time.

In relation to the male character, one of the key arguments that Clover makes is that "boys die, in short, not because they are boys, but because they make mistakes."[70] They make mistakes by getting drunk, having sex, doing drugs and taking unnecessary risks against the advice of the Final Girl. The dispatching of male characters is incidental in the earlier slasher film. This view of female characters as the predominant victim in 1970s and 1980s slasher films has been disputed, most notably by Barry S. Sapolsky and Fred Molitor in their essay "Content Trends in Contemporary Horror Films." Sapolosky and Molitor undertook a statistical analysis of the deaths within selected slasher films and determined that there was no significant difference between the number of male and female deaths.[71] For Clover, male victims tend to function as little more than something for the Final Girl to find as she flees the killer and are used within the narrative as a way of increasing the Final Girls fear before her final stand-off against the killer. Thus many recent slasher films linger on the deaths of male characters as much as female characters. This aspect of Clover's argument has definitely changed in contemporary films with a male character being as equal to an onscreen death as a female character. Not only are male characters equal to death but unlike the slasher films of the 1970s and 1980s, they are now as likely to express fear and know of their impending death. Sapalosky and Molitor did note in their study of traditional slasher films that "females were shown in fear significantly longer than were males."[72] However, since the so called torture-porn genre has made a rise in popularity a body, any body, is an open site for the potential of a long drawn out death and the fear that the character is feeling will be as

[69] B. Cherry, 'Refusing to Refuse To Look' in *Identifying Hollywood's Audiences: Cultural Identity and the Movies,* ed. M. Stokes and R Maltby (London: British Film Institute, 1999).
[70] C.J. Clover. *Men, Women and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film.* (New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1993), 34.
[71] B. S. Sapolosky, & Molitor, F., "Content Trends in Contemporary Horror Films" in J.B Weaver & R. Tamborini (eds.), *Horror Films: Current Research on Audience Preferences and Reactions* (New York: Routledge,2009), 40.
[72] ibid., 45

depicted and focussed on as the dismemberment. The first *Hostel* film (2005) features the slow murder of a male character which comprises a large portion of the main action of the film. This type of horror is less concerned about the sex of the body it destroys and more about how detailed that destruction can be, recent developments have focused on long scenes of terror that have little to do with the sex of the victim on screen.

"Even in films in which males and females are killed in roughly even numbers, the lingering images are of the latter:"[73] this persistent image of the female victim is an aspect of Clover's theory that is no longer as applicable as it once was. This leads to the question whether the body that is destroyed no longer matters, particularly from the early 2000s and the development of torture porn and its subsequent influence on the broader horror genre. Within contemporary horror the sex of the victim has been rendered, in most cases, to be of little consideration, which raises the question: why is the female hero such a recurrent and prominent figure? As mentioned previously, Clover sees this figure as gender bending, a figure who points to the possibility of cross-gender identification that alters how spectatorship and the gaze works within film. However, her argument fails to take into consideration why the body of the hero is repeatedly female, especially as this has continued into the contemporary era where male and female bodies are destroyed in equal numbers and in equal ways. The figure of the Surviving Woman has grown beyond the parameters of the Final Girl and her relation to gender, her role as hero, her attachment to her friends and family, and the quality of her fight needs to be re-examined in light of changes within contemporary horror.

Linda Williams writes in 'When the Woman Looks' about the connection between monster and the female heroine within 1920s and 1930s monster films. The heroines of these films are usually the first ones to show the audience the true visage of the monster, or register the horror for the other characters within the film. "[T]he female look – a look given prominent position in the horror film – shares the male fear of the monster's freakishness, but also recognises the sense in which this freakishness is similar to her own difference."[74] These women take on the rare role for women in film, taking control of the investigative gaze and

[73] C.J. Clover. *Men, Women and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film.* (New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1993), 35.
[74] L. Williams, "When The Woman Looks" in *The Dread Of Difference*, ed. B. K. Grant (Austin: Texas UP, 1996), 20-21.

turning this on the monster. Williams discusses how this scene is usually where the heroine is punished for wielding the gaze by referring to the scene in *The Phantom of The Opera* (1925) where the heroine pulls the Phantom's mask off and his hideous features are revealed to her and the audience.[75] The female figure who takes control of the gaze is seen to be punished for controlling what is usually the prerogative of the male protagonist. Another way of viewing a pivotal scene such as this one is that without the actions of the heroine the film would have not progressed and the Phantom would have remained hidden, out of the sight of the audience. The identification between heroine and monster has largely been made null and void by the changes in narrative and the increased malevolent nature of the villain in contemporary horror has removed sympathetic identification as an avenue for the heroine. A parallel within the slasher genre of the *Phantom of the Opera* scene can be found in *Halloween*, where Laurie, the Final Girl, sees Michael Myers outside the window when she is in class. Michael is revealed to the audience in sunlight, it is also powerful because she gazes at him while he looks at her. Unlike within *The Phantom of the Opera*, Laurie is not fearful at this first sighting of him. This is the beginning of the gaze that has been a consistent aspect of the lead female character within horror narratives, being wielded as a source of power that does not result in it being turned against her. The power she wields in her gaze and in her ability to drive the narrative forward is still a significant aspect of the female hero.

The Final Girl of Clover's account is largely motivated by fear: "she is the one who encounters the mutilated bodies of her friends and perceives the full extent of the preceding horror and of her own peril; who is chased, cornered, wounded; whom we see scream, stagger, fall, rise, and scream again. She is abject terror personified."[76] The female hero still witnesses the dead bodies of her friends and she knows her death will be similar if she does not act, but Clover's Final Girl is not motivated by anger; rather she is born out of fear. The recent female hero, however, is a 'being of anger': she sees what has happened to her friends, what she has been driven to do in order to stay alive and she is angry about it. She is angry enough to fight, to be the aggressor, not to just be the one who reacts to what is being done to her. This aspect of rage is one of the characteristics that separate the new female hero from the Final Girl. Clover's Final Girl is not motivated by an emotion other than fear, her character is not given enough screen time for the audience to see her connections with her

[75] Ibid,. 19.
[76] C.J. Clover. *Men, Women and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film.* (New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1993), 35.

friends or her family, nor is she given time to grieve over the mutilated corpses of her friends and family before the killer is upon her. This inclusion of emotions like anger within contemporary horror will be explored as one of the key aspects of the Surviving Woman and will be examined more fully in chapter four. Within contemporary horror the female hero is depicted with more psychological depth, snippets of her life are revealed before the killer appears and begins to destroy all that she holds dear. We are invited to be part of her world and see her emotional connections. The Surviving Woman relies on violence more than the Final Girl usually does. The focus on her emotional ties and the relationships to those around her who fall victim to the killer explains her more brutal behaviour against the killer and ensure the audience maintains their connection with her, rather than being alienated from her.

The aim of this thesis is to examine Clover's claim that the Final Girl is a stand-in for the male viewer and to argue against this claim by re-appropriating the figure of the Surviving Woman as an active, capable woman in her own right and not justified by her alignment with the masculine. Another related aim is to show how the Surviving Woman is a figure of female heroism which is always a problematic, but desirable concept for feminist criticism. Clover's argument also does not allow room for female audience members and their reactions to horror and the figure of the Surviving Woman. Clover writes "my interest in the male viewer's stake in horror spectatorship is such that I have consigned to virtual invisibility all other members of the audience."[77] Clover does acknowledge that her study is unconcerned by what the female viewer, or any other demographic, would gain from viewing the slasher film. Limiting the ways in which the Surviving Woman can be read by a female audience, limits her potential to add to the progress of active women in film and television.

The persistence of a female body in the role of active hero is significant and deserves to be explored. As noted earlier, male heroism has never had a place in horror, but the active female hero has developed gradually out of the heroine from the gothic tradition who normally walked the darkened hallways of a haunted house, candelabra held high, or the woman who, lured in by the phantom, finally unmasks him. As Williams wrote, this character actively looked for, and at, the source of horror in these films.[78] However they took no action in defending themselves or attempting to fight the monster; the gaze was the only

[77] Ibid., 7.
[78] L. Williams, "When The Woman Looks" in *The Dread Of Difference*, ed. B. K. Grant (Austin: Texas UP, 1996), 20-21.

active power they had. The monster was either destroyed by an angry mob or met some unfortunate accident involving fire or the collapse of a building on top of them. Usually this involved a building on fire. As mentioned earlier the lead male character was particularly inept in the heroism department. The woman who gazed upon the monster did not have any need to fight as she sympathised with the monster – both were considered to be the Other as they were opposed to the norm, as represented by the male characters within the narrative.[79] As the film portrayal changed from sympathetic monsters to psychopathic killers the heroine became a hero and she armed herself, first becoming the Final Girl and now evolving into the Surviving Woman.

Chapter One will further analyse Clover's concept of the Final Girl, looking at the key points of her theory and those critics who favour her analysis and those who critique it. The chapter will also consider Vera Dika's *Games of Terror* (1990) to show how her description of the surviving girl is slightly different from Clover's but comes to the same conclusion. Both Clover and Dika examine slasher films for what they reveal about those that watch them. The films Dika and Clover analyse in their works are similar: they examine the importance of *Halloween* and *Friday the 13th*, and they both ignore those films that did not gain as much box office appeal but still were important to the genre, the fans and the Final Girl. This selectivity, the consequences of these exclusions and how they limit the potential readings of the slasher film and the female hero, will be discussed in this chapter. It will look at films from the era they discuss that contradict or point away from their theories in order to demonstrate the further readings of the slasher genre that are possible.

Chapter Two will discuss the role of the abject in horror. The abject, as detailed by Julia Kristeva's *The Powers of Horror: An Essay in Abjection* (1982), is the source of the visual signifiers of horror and have become increasingly more prominent within the genre. Blood, viscera and other bodily fluids have always made up the mise-en-scène of the horror genre but due to changes in technology the realism of these effects has increased dramatically and has led, along with changes in censorship, to this starker depiction on screen. This means that the abject has taken on a much more visual and realistic presence. Blood that once appeared as fire engine red in earlier horror films, now appears crimson and viscous, and the insides of a human being can be created to make it appear that a human body is being torn

[79] Ibid.

apart. This also means in relation to the Surviving Woman that the audience is often shown her covered in the signs of both the killer's destruction and her own struggle against him. Where once the Final Girl witnessed the abject as part of her dawning realisation of her impending danger, the female hero now hides under a table as her fiancé is cut in half by a chainsaw, his blood coating her as she stifles her cries (*Texas Chainsaw Massacre: The Beginning* 2006); she falls into a pit filled with blood while escaping, which she then uses as a source of camouflage (*The Descent* 2005). The abject, generally represented in horror films as blood, guts, vomit or faeces, can extend to anything that is generally considered to be the hidden aspect of the human body. It has taken on a heightened place in the horror genre and it has impacted on the female hero to the extent that it has become a part of her development within the film and how the abject relates to women.

This chapter will combine a study of how the abject is depicted on screen alongside Gilles Deleuze's theory of becoming.[80] It will examine how the female hero uses the abject as a source of power. The chapter will also incorporate René Girard's *Violence and the Sacred* (1972) and how violence can be seen as a polluting aspect, as well as how violence within the horror film could be considered abject. As mentioned earlier, the notion of a sympathetic connection between monster and hero has long disintegrated. However, this does not mean that there is not an ongoing connection between the Surviving Woman and the killer as they are connected through blood. The blood spilt by the killer then touches the female hero and begins her transformation into the one who will defeat him. To show the changing portrayal of the Final Girl, this chapter will involve a close analysis of remakes and how the abject has been used differently between the original and the remake as well as other recent horror, such as *The Cellar Door* (2007)*, The Woman* (2011) and *The Descent 1* and *The Descent: Part 2* (2005/2009).

Chapter Three will explore how the representation of women in the action genre has influenced horror's ability to represent active female heroism. This chapter will investigate Sherrie A Inness' theory outlined in *Tough Girls: Women Warriors and Wonder Women in Popular Culture* (1998), of the action genre and will explore the cross-genre characters starting with Ripley from the *Alien* series and her development throughout the four films (1979-1997). It will then move on to the title character of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997-

[80] G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, trans. B. Massumi. (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013).

2004), and finally to Alice from the *Resident Evil* series. These characters all operate within a setting that is both part of the action genre and the horror genre. *Alien* (1979), which is described as a "science- fiction/slasher hybrid,"[81] places Ripley within the realm of the horror film and both Buffy and Alice fight monsters that are usually the feature of horror. This chapter also incorporates aspects of the abject that have been discussed in the previous chapter and addresses how the abject can also work much like a mutation does in superhero narratives. The exposure to the abject leads to them becoming more powerful. Like a superhero, the Surviving Woman within these hybrid narratives gains strength and skill from her exposure to the abject.

Chapter Four examines how recent horror combines love and anger in the role of the Surviving Woman, which is an aspect that is less visible in early slasher films. Many of the recent surviving women are mothers or take on the role of surrogate mothers in the film. This means that their compassion and love are elements of their survival skills, it also adds to their heroism. The other side of love is anger. Recent horror does not rest on the Surviving Woman being motivated by love or motivated by anger but rather a combination is often the case. Anger is not a motivation for Clover's Final Girl, in fact anger is not mentioned at all barring the fact that second wave feminism provided us with the idea that a woman could be angry enough to fight for her own survival.[82] But anger is a trait the Surviving Woman has in abundance in recent horror. This chapter will analyse the remake of *Halloween* (2007) and show how loss of love and an excess of anger can create the Surviving Woman who also becomes the monster of the narrative. Other examples of this will be used to highlight the significance of these emotions in the creation of the Surviving Woman. Love and anger work together to create a new heroism through the actions that these emotions compel the Surviving Woman to take. This chapter will also examine the rise of the faux Surviving Woman. This figure appears in the narrative as the character who draws the audience's identification as the hero of these films, only to have these assumptions subverted. This faux Surviving Woman gives the audience her subjective view and the audience are left unaware of her true malice until the very end. This figure is a recent occurrence and reveals a lot about how ingrained ideas surrounding the Surviving Woman remain in horror movies and how the genre needs to continually transform itself. The chapter will also examine the rise in

[81] C.J. Clover. *Men, Women and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film.* (New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1993), 23.
[82] Ibid., 17.

the central positioning of women in the genre through the films *The Descent*, *The Woman* and *Silent Hill* (2006). These films prominently feature groups of women interacting with each other and revolve around these interactions. This new prominence is significant as Clover's argument places the Final Girl as being separate from other girls in the narratives.

The final chapter of this thesis will look at international horror films. The majority of the films examined throughout much of the thesis have emerged from the United States. The concluding chapter however is dedicated to horror narratives from other countries and how they interpret or exclude the function of the Surviving Woman beyond the American boundaries of this genre. The chapter will explore Australian horror films such as *The Babadook* (2014) and *The Loved Ones* (2009) and their representations of women. It will also take key examples from Asian, French, Spanish, Austrian and Norwegian horror genres, ranging from the supernatural to the serial killer themes. A key section of this chapter will be a close analysis of the film series *Cold Prey* (2006-2008). This film series is significant because it is a recent slasher narrative which takes place in Norway, shifting the standard slasher tropes to previously unexplored territory as well as altering the slasher film through plot and character development. This chapter aims to highlight how different cultures interpret the horror genre and the Final Girl, as well as how women function within the narratives of these films in a range of roles.

Certain aspects of the contemporary horror genre fall outside of the scope of this thesis. Audiences will be largely set aside, as there has been a surge in audience studies of the horror genre. Also the focus of this thesis is on how the character of the Final Girl has developed into the Surviving Woman, and the demographic of the audience does little to alter the significance of this enduring figure. The advent of the male survivor will also be left out of this discussion as this character type is developing in significance and deserves to be explored in its own space.

Derek Malcolm, a film critic for *The Guardian***,** states: "I wouldn't actually say I can think of a proper feminist horror movie or slasher movie, maybe there have been some but I can't find them and some feminists who say there have been I think are talking out the back of their head if nowhere else."[83] This assertion raises the question of how one would define a 'proper'

[83] *Fear, Panic and Censorship*, directed by D. Kenny (United Kingdom: Shashmedia, 2000), DVD.

feminist horror movie and also leaves out one aspect of film that is important to its progressive qualities and its extensive enjoyment, which is that films are open for interpretation. Films are not closed; each person viewing them will see something that someone else will not. Clover, in her reading of the Final Girl, saw something that changed the way people thought about spectatorship and audience identification. What she did not fully see was the importance of this female body fighting, defeating and surviving. Horror has incorporated aspects of feminism that will be explored throughout this thesis and although claiming all contemporary horror is feminist in tone and meaning is not the aim, a claim will be made that certain aspects of feminism can be seen in these films as an influence on the perception of women and what they are capable of. The presence and duration of the active female is testament to this incorporation, particularly, as will be shown, a woman who is more and more frequently motivated by her anger towards the mistreatment of her sex and who is angered by the sexual violence that she either faces or witnesses.

Chapter One.
The Trouble with Final Girls:
Critiques and Expansions on the Theory of the Final Girl.

"Because the heroine is represented as resourceful, intelligent and dangerous it does not follow that she should be seen as a pseudoman"

- Barbara Creed
Monstrous-Feminine

Randy: Careful. This is the moment when the supposedly dead killer comes back to life, for one last scare.
[Billy begins to rise]
Sidney: [shoots Billy] Not in my movie.

- *Scream* (1996)

As Valerie Wee writes, "the slasher film has always maintained a complicated relationship with gender."[84] This is made abundantly clear by the many and varied analysis that this genre has produced. Clover's analysis of the Final Girl has become extensively used in horror film theory. One of the reasons for the success of this theory is that it was the first analysis to consider the importance of the trope of the surviving girl and to highlight the prominence of this figure within the slasher genre. The term Final Girl has become widely used to describe the surviving girl, or woman, who does not die. This term has taken on wide usage not only within the feminist film criticism, but also within broader film theory and fan culture. The use of this term does not mean however that Clover's definition of what it means is generally accepted. Clover's main concern is with how the audience, which she assumes to be largely made up of adolescent males, can identify with an active female hero. Clover writes that her study "explores the relationship of the 'majority viewer' (the younger male) to the female victim-heroes who have become such a conspicuous screen presence in certain sectors of

[84] V. Wee. 'Resurrecting and Updating the Teen Slasher: The Case of Scream', *Journal of Popular Film and Television*, 32, no. 2 (2006), 57.

horror."[85] As mentioned in the introduction, she is unconcerned by any other audience members. Clover's theory has gained support from theorists and fans and is seen to be one of the most ground-breaking explorations of the horror genre from a feminist perspective, one that has taken a life of its own.

Another reason for the importance and prominence of Clover's theory is that it was one of the first attempts to read horror films from a feminist viewpoint. Clover's work rehabilitated what was seen, and sometimes still is seen, as an extremely sexist and misogynistic genre for feminist film study. Her work is considered to be "one of the more, if not ground breaking, accounts/recuperations of the horror film from a feminist perspective."[86] Clover's work also challenged "the way in which feminist film theory, film theory in general and popular film criticism understood processes of identification in the horror genre."[87] Her work opened up new avenues for research. She gave film theory a term for the surviving girl, brought this previously unstudied figure to the foreground and challenged the ways in which spectatorship functions.

Clover found that through the figure of the Final Girl a cross-gender identification was possible and even encouraged by these films.[88] However her sole focus on the male audience member limits her argument. The lack of exploration of how other audience members perceive, interpret and interact with the Final Girl does not fully explore the whole audience's identification process with the Final Girl. Yet some of the criticism that Clover's work has faced has come from both a misinterpretation of her argument, usually surrounding the figure of the Final Girl as a feminist figure, and also from its limited scope and applicability. Some of the criticism has also stemmed from the limited selection of films that she uses. The films she uses assist in proving her theory, while films that would derail or alter it seem to be discarded. Later I will return to this selective film selection, to discuss it in detail later. Regardless of this the term Final Girl is still in wide usage; this however does not mean that the character has not changed dramatically since its emergence in Clover's theory.

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[85] C.J. Clover. *Men, Women and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film.* (New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1993), 7.
[86] D. Totaro, "The Final Girl: A Few Thoughts on Feminism and Horror," *Off Screen*, vol. 6, 1 (2002) http://offscreen.com/view/feminism_and_horror.
[87] T. Rizzo. *Deleuze and Film: A Feminist Introduction*. (London: Continuum, 2012), 83.
[88] C.J. Clover. *Men, Women and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film.* (New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1993), 46.

Prior to Clover's analysis of women and gender in horror films, Vera Dika published *Games of Terror* (1990). Like Clover she is focussed on the male audience and the "game" that they play with the slasher, or as she refers to them, stalker films. Dika limited the films she examined to those that, "while adhering to the conventions of the formula, were also popularly received by their audiences."[89] Dika's analysis focusses on *Halloween*, *Friday the 13th*, *Prom Night* (1979), *Terror Train* (1980), *Graduation Day* (1981), *Happy Birthday to Me* (1981), *Friday the 13th Part 2* (1981), *Hell Night* (1981) and *The Burning* (1981).[90] Dika selected the films based on their conventions but also their box office takings and she found that "the most 'popular' stalker films often display the most rigidly conventional configuration of elements."[91] Dika's selected films all were released between the years 1978 and 1984. They all follow certain key moments and tropes: they all feature a past event that the killer witnessed or caused the killer to suffer a loss. This event is committed usually by a group of teenagers, or in the case of *Prom Night*, children and the killer seeks revenge for this loss by killing those who caused the loss. An event in the present "commemorates the past event,"[92] or triggers the killing spree. This is usually a date or an occasion that marks a significant time for the teenage group. Dika writes: "social rituals, such as the occasion of Halloween, prom night, graduation day and fraternity initiation rituals actually form the basic situation of many of the films."[93] It is during one of these rituals that the killer comes back and targets members of the present that closely resemble those of the past. The killer begins to kill members of this community, the heroine witnesses this, sees the killer, battles with him and defeats him for the time being. Yet, though she has survived she is not free.[94]

It is the above detailed attributes, combined with their box office popularity, that provide Dika with the key features for defining the genre for her purpose. The issue with this approach, selecting only those films that grossed the most, that adhered to the list of conventions closely and that appeared in such a short period of time is that many films that had an alternative reading and reflected a different aspect of the genre are ignored. Dika's justification for using *Halloween* as the starting point is because she considered *Halloween* as

[89] V. Dika. *Games of Terror* (New Jersey: Associated UP, 1990), 14.
[90] Ibid.
[91] Ibid.
[92] Ibid., 59.
[93] Ibid., 17.
[94] Ibid., 59-60.

the beginning of the stalker cycle and she dedicates a whole chapter to this film as the beginning.[95] Films that did not receive cinema releases, those that played with the conventions of the then burgeoning slasher genre, or those that missed the golden age of the slasher film have been disregarded. One example of a film that has been ignored by both Dika and Clover that I will use in this chapter is *Just Before Dawn* (1981). The reasons why this film is so disruptive for both Dika and Clover will be discussed in detail later in the chapter. Dika analyses these films in terms of how the audience, which she also sees as young and male, interact with these films and how the bloody violence, the inventive kills, the masked killer and the heroine create a game for this audience to play.[96] Dika's use of game is a key component of her argument and is connected to the repetitive, and therefore knowable, structure of these films and how this knowledge leads to the audience members interacting with the screen by way of predicting what is about to happen before it happens.

Dika sees the heroine as a key element of this game that the audience plays. The audience, from Dika's observations, "greeted the gruesome events on screen with open enthusiasm, cheering, laughing, and encouraging the actions of both the heroine *and* the killer."[97] Dika's analysis of the character of the heroine couches her in terms similar to those Clover eventually establishes. Dika's characteristics of the heroine are drawn from opposing the heroine to her female friends. Dika sees the female friends of the Final Girl as being susceptible to death because of "their mannish or aggressive attitude that is deemed unacceptable by the film."[98] Using *Halloween* as an example, Dika sees the sexual freedom of Laurie Strode's friends as the signifier of their aggression. They are unconcerned by the emotional aspects of relationships and this places them in a masculine realm. Contrasting to this is Laurie, the film's Final Girl, who presents a "sexually nonthreatening characterisation."[99] "Laurie is deliberately costumed and made up…to hide her sexuality;"[100] this lack of sexual aggression, read masculine aggression, is what allows Laurie to become the hero of the film. According to Dika, Laurie's power does still come from a masculine space. Laurie wields masculine attributes in a different way to her friends. Her friends' masculine aggression is directed towards sexuality; they approach sex in a way that is usually

[95] Ibid., 31-55.
[96] Ibid., 9.
[97] Ibid.
[98] Ibid., 45.
[99] Ibid., 47.
[100] Ibid.

perceived to be the domain of males. The masculinity displayed by her friends is sexualised, whereas Laurie's masculine attributes reveal themselves through how she wields violence and the gaze.[101] Slasher films of the 70s and 80s have a strong moral code about drugs, alcohol and sex, Laurie's friends' casual approach to sex is an affront to this code. This moral code is usually conveyed through the deaths of those who engage in this immoral behaviour and by the survival of the one girl who does not take part. This, coupled with this masculine, aggressive approach to sex, within a female body doubles the danger that they are in.

Laurie's expression of masculinity is also displayed in her use of the investigative gaze, of knowledge and violence. "In her ability (admittedly limited) to cinematically take others (especially the killer) as the object of her gaze and to engage in narratively significant action through the use of violence, the heroine occupies an essentially 'masculine' position within the film." Laurie's masculine attributes are all those that make her a hero.[102] She is not using these masculine attributes for pleasure or enjoyment, but survival. Dika sees the Final Girl's control of the narrative as her expression of her masculinity.[103] This links Dika's description of the Final Girl with her view of the oppositions that govern the slasher film. Dika writes that "the opposition that separates the heroine from the rest of the young community…can best be explained as *valued/devalued.*"[104] Laurie and her friends both wield characteristics that would be considered masculine. The difference, however, lies in the expression of this masculinity. The Final Girl, in Dika's view, has the right amount of masculine qualities. Male characters within these films also lack the right amount of these qualities. Dika describes one of the male victims in *Halloween* as an "enfeebled, devalued character, Bob is incapable of protecting himself."[105] Both male and female characters suffer from the same lack and that is they lack the right masculine qualities. Within the context of the slasher film, as Dika interprets it, the right masculine qualities are what ensure power and survival.

Male characters are divided into differing levels of this lack. They either are like Bob and lack masculine qualities, such as survival instinct and the ability to use the gaze, or they are like Laurie's female friends and have an excess of masculinity but directed towards things

[101] Ibid.
[102] Ibid., 55.
[103] Ibid.
[104] Ibid., 56.
[105] Ibid., 48.

that the genre frowns upon for female characters such as sex; or they have an excess of machismo and run directly into danger in an attempt at bravery and heroism. Within each film those who survive have a mixture of masculine and feminine traits, but it is the right masculine traits that lead to survival. This balance seems crucial within Dika's argument and it is highlighted with each film example she provides. Extending this argument beyond *Halloween*, Dika uses *Friday the 13th* (1980) and the Final Girl of that film, Alice, to suggest that "Alice has 'feminine' and 'masculine' skills that engender respect. She has a sensitive, artistic talent…but is also practical enough to know how to fix a roof."[106] Early on in the film Alice is singled out because of this unique blend of characteristics. She is also more demurely dressed than the other girls at camp, "unlike the others, she is almost never seen without clothes."[107] She is not overtly sexual and her energies do not seem to be spent on attracting a boy. These traits, which she shares with Laurie and the other Final Girls of this slasher period, allow her to perceive and realise the danger that she is in, as well as be able to violently defend herself in order to drive the narrative forward and expel the killer from the narrative.[108] The key to survival, for Dika, is balance. The surviving girl is a careful blend of masculine and feminine, she is androgynous.

The surviving girl is often distinctly contrasted to other young people on screen. These group members "occupy an enfeebled position and have little of her integrity or self-control."[109] Within Dika's argument the young people's function within the narrative "is primarily to perform activities that can be looked at, preferably while they wear a reduced amount of body covering."[110] For Dika, the characters, outside of the survivor, function as spectacle. Drawing on Laura Mulvey's theory and applying to Dika's definition of the majority of characters within the horror narrative, they cannot wield the gaze and as such are trapped as objects within the gaze of the killer and the audience.[111] Unlike the other girls in *Halloween* whose sexual aggression marks them for death, the other girls in *Friday the 13th* are marked for death by their lack of ability to be more than eye candy. This obviously excludes the Final Girls of these films whose studiousness, responsibility and sexual reluctance separate

[106] Ibid., 70.
[107] Ibid.
[108] Ibid.
[109] Ibid.
[110] Ibid.
[111] L. Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" in *Visual and Other Pleasures* (Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 1989)

them out from the girls who are marked as victims from the outset just as easily as the Final Girls are marked as survivors. "In their powerlessness they occupy a more 'feminine' position in the film, and, as devalued objects, they can be dispatched without regret."[112] The position that the peripheral characters occupy is merely to fill time, and to demonstrate the remorselessness and brutality of the killer, until the final confrontation between the killer and the survivor. As the survivor is rarely viewed in a state of undress, she is not held in the same voyeuristic gaze as her friends. She is more valuable within the narrative because she is not trapped within the gaze of the killer and has the power to wield the gaze. Her mix of masculine and feminine traits allows her power over the killer, which allows her to turn the gaze upon the killer and allow the killer to be seen by the audience.[113] This revelation of the killer is the first step in her triumph, once she has the killer trapped in her gaze she can wield violence against them in order to survive.

Dika's argument is centred on how the stalker film works as a game for its audience, as well as with its audience. The audience, after viewing multiple films within this genre, know what will happen and when but the films play with these expectations by a small, but significant, innovation. "These films allow the audience to participate in the stalker film game: a game of terror, stimulating both in its predictability and its surprises."[114] Though many films did little to alter the basic template, innovation was found in the use of a new special effect or with a twist in the conclusion. For example, the young Jason Vorhees jumping from the depths of Crystal Lake in *Friday the 13th*. What Dika describes as the stalker film is identical to what Clover terms the slasher film. Dika's choice of the term 'stalker' is tied to her argument that these films invite the audience to stalk the victims with the killer; that is they take on the killer's perspective. The predictability of the genre is seen to be a key feature of these films. Theresa Rizzo describes this feature of the genre as a safety valve for the audience, arguing that the "genre tends to tell the same story over and over, so the audience is never in any doubt as to how things will end."[115] The films are made safe by this very feature, everyone who has seen a stalker film before feels a familiarity each time they see another one. For the audience, repeated viewing removes the element of surprise and also adds a level of "'game-play' in which the spectatorial experience is heightened by negotiating

[112] V. Dika. *Games of Terror* (New Jersey: Associated UP, 1990), 71.
[113] Ibid., 70.
[114] Ibid., 139.
[115] T. Rizzo. *Deleuze and Film: A Feminist Introduction*. (London: Continuum, 2012), 88.

recurring scenarios in familiar settings."[116] In other words, the repetition allows the audience a certain level of perceived control over the events on screen through their insider knowledge. Dika's interest is in how a genre that is built on repetition could maintain such a strong audience presence and how the repetition is actually part of its appeal, "the predictability of the films elements encourage a play on seeing and not seeing, knowing and not knowing, that raises the level of viewer interaction with the films."[117] Clover's argument is less focused on the predictability of the genre, though she does note this aspect, but is more concerned with how the audience identifies with the characters on screen. Clover's argument focuses on the cross gender identification aspect of the slasher film and on how the audience, young, male and adolescent, are expected to identify with a female character who is being threatened with penetration and death.

Clover's approach to the slasher film is similar to Dika's, but also diverges on key aspects: film choice, the criteria for the selection of films and the main traits which define the slasher film. Clover's selection of films comes from a wider time span, whereas Dika begins her study with *Halloween*; Clover begins with the *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974) as it is, she asserts, the origin of the character that would become the Final Girl. *Texas Chainsaw Massacre,* along with *Halloween*, created the framework and characteristics that emerged as the definitive slasher genre. These two films, for Clover, worked with each other and "engendered a new spate of variations and imitations."[118] She takes a wider span of years but this still does not stop the films she discusses as being very limited. Both Dika and Clover ignore those films that differ from the standard of the era, this being defined through certain genre conventions that appear in their selected films, but also those that had mainstream release and a certain amount of box office success. Dika's reason for this lies with her focus on those that earned well at the box office and therefore had a cinematic release. Clover's pool of films are those that were available in video stores for rent and this provided her some statistical evidence of who was renting, and by extension, watching these films. The issue with this approach is that it is not the most accurate way to garner information about who, once that video is in the home, is actually viewing it. Also horror fans are known for their obsession with the genre, limiting the films to those that were most easily accessible does not

[116] C. Jess-Cooke. *Film Sequels: Theory and Practice from Hollywood to Bollywood* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2009), 54
[117] V. Dika. *Games of Terror* (New Jersey: Associated UP, 1990), 128.
[118] C.J. Clover. *Men, Women and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film.* (New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1993), 24.

take into account that fans of the genre will find rare or unique horror films from around the globe, that there are conventions, communities, horror fan magazines, for people to access a range of different horror, not just those films that are released and easily accessible.

Clover works through the traits of the slasher film systematically. She states that "the killers are normally the fixed elements and the victims the changeable ones in any given series."[119] The youths within these films will enter a terrible place filled with terrible families. The once adult victim, such as Marion Crane in *Psycho* (1960), is "now typically in her teens."[120] "Where once she was female, now she is both girl and boy, though most often conspicuously girl."[121] The deaths of boys are less visually played out than the deaths of female victims, making the quintessential victim that of a girl. [122] Clover uses an example from *Halloween 2* (1981), in which she compares the death of a male orderly with the death of a female nurse. The orderly is dispatched without ever seeing his killer; also the audience's ability to see this death is hindered by vapour and the use of close-ups is rejected in favour of the use of a medium longshot. When the nurse is killed, however, the scene is shot in medium close-up. The audience watches as she goes through the emotions of "apprehension, and then, as she faces him, terror; we see the knife plunge into her repeatedly, hear her cries, and watch her blood fill the pool."[123] For Clover, this scene is evidence of her insistence that female victims die in more terror and with more fixation on their actual deaths, as opposed to male victims whose deaths are quick or obscured from the audience's view. Finally, "the image of the distressed female most likely to linger in memory is the image of the one who did not die: the survivor, or Final Girl."[124] It is this figure that Clover develops, mapping out her characteristics, traits and what she means for the viewing audience, and the theory that has taken on a life of its own from Clover's writing and developed a wide usage in horror film theory. This image is quite striking, and often contemporary horror ends with a victorious Surviving Woman emerging from the wreckage. The image of the figure of the surviving, final woman is still significant. The purpose of this thesis is not to deny the centrality of this character and her importance to horror narratives, but to dispute Clover's view on the traits that define her and how she functions in contemporary horror.

[119] Ibid. p. 30.
[120] Ibid. pp. 32-33.
[121] Ibid. p. 33.
[122] Ibid. p. 35.
[123] Ibid.
[124] Ibid.

For Clover and Dika the audience are key to their arguments. They both assume the audience to be young and Dika states that though these films were R-rated the audience was usually comprised of youths between the age of 12 and 17: "here the youngsters (who ranged across the spectrum of race and class) greeted the gruesome events of screen with open enthusiasm."[125] Though Dika does acknowledge that 55 percent of the audience for the stalker films of the 1980s were women,[126] according to Isabel Cristina Pinedo, Dika arrives at this number through a misreading of the statistics.[127] The sex of the audience in Dika's argument is secondary as it is the appeal of these films to youth that is key. She does lay out the claim that "*Halloween* specifically assumes a male viewer" but she does nothing to explain the sex bias in the appeal of these films. Clover also sees the key audience for these films as adolescents, but unlike Dika who focuses on the age of the audience and the sex is secondary to her argument, the sex of the audience is the key for Clover's argument. Clover states "young males are…the slasher's implied audience, the object of its address."[128] Brigid Cherry writes that the overriding assumption within most work on horror audiences "is that young males predominate."[129] Clover is not alone in her acceptance that horror is largely appealing to the young and the male. Horror films are assumed to be only interesting for the simple minded or as dangerous to women.[130] Cherry focuses on female fans of the genre in an attempt to dispel the notion that horror can only be enjoyable to young men. She interviewed female horror fans and discovered what they enjoyed about horror films. She found that both film academics and the industry itself are overwhelmingly male and when horror films appeal to women this is reacted to with surprise.[131] Her study did confirm that women do enjoy horror, but do so in the comfort of their own home, thus rendering them invisible to cinema audience studies.[132] She also found that they do not react to horror in the way female audience members are expected to, "they do not flinch, block their view or turn

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[125] V. Dika, *Games of Terror* (New Jersey: Associated UP, 1990), 9.
[126] V. Dika, "The Stalker Film, 1978-1981" in *American Horrors: Essays on the Modern American Horror Film*, ed. G. A. Waller (Chicago: Illinois UP, 1987), 87.
[127] I.C. Pinedo, *Recreational Terror: Women and the Pleasures of Horror Film Viewing*. (New York: State University of New York Press, 1997), 72.
[128] C.J. Clover. *Men, Women and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film.* (New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1993), 23.
[129] B. Cherry, *Horror* (London: Routledge, 2009), 40.
[130] B. Cherry, 'Refusing to Refuse To Look' in *Identifying Hollywood's Audiences: Cultural Identity and the Movies,* ed. M. Stokes and R Maltby (London: British Film Institute, 1999), 187
[131] B. Cherry, *Horror* (London, Routledge, 2009), 42.
[132] Ibid.

away from the screen."[133] Cherry's study did find that the supernatural or occult film were more appealing to the women in her study. However she did find that some of them did enjoy the slasher genre and that this type of horror was more appealing to those who saw themselves as fans of horror.[134] She also found that female fans of the slasher genre were more likely to enjoy those films that were considered "well-made or original – and not others which were held to be formulaic or imitative."[135] This survey suggests that ideas of taste and quality come into play far more with female viewers than male viewers.[136] Cherry's study shows that there are female fans and viewers of horror but the dominant idea remains that the pleasure of horror is essentially a masculine one.[137] Clover's attention to the young male audience is based on the visibility of this group and also on her own informal video shop survey. Her focus is on the cross gender identification that takes place within the male viewer through his identification with the Final Girl.

The Final Girl, for Clover, is the one who, after finding the bodies of her friends and comprehending the full extent of the threat to her own life, "is chased, cornered, wounded; whom we see scream, stagger, fall, rise, and scream again."[138] She has the longest time to comprehend her impending death, "if her friends knew they were about to die only seconds before the event, the Final Girl lives with the knowledge for long minutes or hours."[139] During the early depictions of this character she is only saved by the intervention of another. At the end of *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* the Final Girl, Sally, after hours of running, being captured, running and screaming, is only saved at the last minute by a passing truck which she scrambles into. In *Halloween*, the Final Girl, Laurie, fights, wounding Michael her assailant repeatedly until she is saved by Dr Loomis, who has been tracking Michael since his escape from the asylum. Clover sees a change in this character in the four years between *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* and *Halloween* "from passive to active defence – it is no surprise that the films following *Halloween* present Final Girls who not only fight back but do so with ferocity and even kill the killer on their own, without help from the outside."[140]

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[133] B. Cherry, 'Refusing to Refuse To Look' in *Identifying Hollywood's Audiences: Cultural Identity and the Movies,* ed. M. Stokes and R Maltby (London: British Film Institute, 1999), 199.
[134] Ibid., 193.
[135] Ibid.
[136] Ibid., 194.
[137] M. Hills, *The Pleasures of Horror* (London: Continuum, 2005), 201.
[138] C.J. Clover. *Men, Women and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film.* (New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1993), 35.
[139] Ibid.
[140] Ibid., 37.

For Clover, she is the only character of worth in these films, the audience's only safe point of identification: "The practiced viewer distinguishes her from her friends' minutes into the film. She is the Girl Scout, the bookworm, the mechanic. Unlike her girlfriends…she is not sexually active."[141] The Final Girl's role is the most transparent of all, and unlike the killer we see her in the early stages of the film. Because we see her she is knowable as a safe point of identification, the killer is not seen in entirety until the Final Girl gazes at him in the closing moments of the film. The killer is a shadowy figure, and the audience are never sure who, or what, he actually is. The audience are, at the beginning of the film, encouraged to share the killer's point of view despite the uncertainty surrounding him: an example of how this is done is in the opening scene of *Halloween.* As Dika describes it, the opening scene makes it clear that we, the audience, are seeing what a specific character is seeing. She writes: "its rapid, earth-bound movement and its slight wobbling create an uneasy gaze that is understood as a point-of-view shot attributable to that character."[142] This aspect of filming that the slasher film utilises draws one of the biggest criticisms to the genre. Because the "audiences are invited to join the killer in his work, to enjoy it, to empathize with him as he spies on and slaughters scantily clad women."[143] However, the tie between identification and point of view is not so clear cut. As Clover writes:

> the relation between camera point of view and the processes of viewer identification is poorly understood; the fact that Steven Spielberg can stage an attack in *Jaws* from the shark's point of view…or Hitchcock an attack in *The Birds* from the bird-eye perspective…would seem to suggest either that the viewer's identificatory powers are unbelievably elastic or that point-of-view shots can sometimes be pro forma.[144]

Through the point-of-view shots the audience sees through the killer's eyes but does not know from whose eyes they are seeing; the killer could be an animal, a ghost, a fog, a plant, a woman, a child or a man. This uncertainty detracts from identification with the killer and the audience is given their point of identification in the Final Girl. The audience only maintains a tenuous connection to the killer "before we have seen him directly and before we have

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[141] Ibid., 39.
[142] V. Dika. *Games of Terror* (New Jersey: Associated UP, 1990), 35.
[143] T. M. Sipos. *Horror Film Aesthetics: Creating the Visual Language of Fear.* (North Carolina: MacFarland & Company, 2010), 83
[144] C.J. Clover. *Men, Women and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film.* (New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1993), 45.

come to know the Final Girl in any detail."[145] The structuring of the slasher film which leads the male audience to identify with a strong female lead could be seen as the horror film's answer to feminism, however, for Clover it is not that straightforward. Though the Final Girl is visibly female, her gender alignment is less clear.

Dika and Clover agree on the point of masculinity of the Final Girl. "The gender of the Final Girl is…compromised from the outset by her masculine interests, her inevitable sexual reluctance, her apartness from other girls, sometimes her name."[146] Clover sees the journey of the Final Girl from childhood to adulthood, but proposes that this shift is from feminine to masculine. "The helpless child is gendered feminine; the autonomous adult or subject is gendered masculine; the passage from childhood to adulthood entails a shift from feminine to masculine,"[147] she says. This shift is to help deal with the active female. It also ties in with the shift from the semiotic to the symbolic. The semiotic is before language, a place of sounds, beats and rhythms, at its essence it is the place of the maternal. The symbolic is the domain of law, language and the father. As a child grows up they move from the semiotic to the symbolic and this marks their shift from childhood to adulthood. Semiotic and symbolic are also associated with the opposing feminine and masculine, respectively. "The semiotic is equated with the energetic, rhythmic, bodily contributions of the pre- or anti-social individual," the Symbolic, on the other hand, "is the domain of definite positions and propositions, the social site for the creation of unified texts, discourses, knowledges and practices constituting social life"[148] This masculinisation the Final Girl goes through is also to help the male audience deal with the perceived lack that all women have. This lack is described by Freud as related to woman's lack of a penis. Within women, he claims, this lack causes girls "to share the contempt felt by men for a sex which is lesser in so important a respect."[149] He perceives the penis as something that sparks envy within girls. In respect to boys, this lack is perceived as a wound, evidence of castration, and relates to the fear that their own penis could be castrated. As Freud writes "if a woman had been castrated, then his own possession of a penis was in danger."[150] This concept of lack is resolved in the slasher

[145] Ibid.
[146] Ibid., 48.
[147] Ibid., 50.
[148] E. Grosz, "Philosophy, Subjectivity and the Body: Kristeva and Irigaray" in *Feminist Challenges: Social and Political Theory*, ed. C. Pateman and E. Grosz (Boston: Northeastern UP, 1986), 128.
[149] S. Freud, *On Sexuality: Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, trans. J. Stachey (Middlesex: Penguin, 1977), 337.
[150] Ibid., 352.

film "either through eliminating the woman (earlier victims) or reconstituting her as masculine (Final Girl)."[151] The male audience need to identify with the Final Girl and, the position is, if her lack was not to be resolved somehow through her phallicization then the audience would remain distanced from her.

The extreme situations the Final Girl finds herself in are the reason why she must be physically female. According to Clover, her bodily manifestations as female "can provide a kind of identificatory buffer, an emotional remove that permits the majority of the audience to explore taboo subjects in the relative safety of vicariousness."[152] The majority audience are, in Clover's analysis, adolescent males. The femaleness of the Final Girl acts as a buffer, and provides comfort and security as the body that is being threatened with penetration and death is female. The body of the male audience is not being represented on screen. "She is feminine enough to act out in a gratifying way, a way unapproved for adult males, the terrors and masochistic pleasures of the underlying fantasy, but not so feminine as to disturb the structures of male competence and sexuality,"[153] and her body is a necessity in her frightened and fleeing moments. Terror being unacceptable for males, the Final Girl, who depending on each moment alternates between masculine and feminine but ultimately lands within the masculine, is a suitable vessel for these young males to experience traditionally feminine emotions. This reading of the Final Girl, of course, heavily assumes the paradigm of the male audience. "Figuratively seen, the Final Girl is a male surrogate in things oedipal, a homoerotic stand-in, the audience incorporate; to the extent that she means 'girl' at all, it is only for the purposes of signifying male lack, and even that meaning is nullified in the final scenes."[154] The Final Girl is 'girl' when she is under threat but once the tables have turned, once she stands, fights and "mans" herself,[155] she is masculine. The female survivor, for both Dika and Clover, is ultimately coded masculine. Her body is only female for the purposes of the male audience's comfort. A male body in such circumstances would do nothing but unnerve the audience, according to Clover: "the Final Girl is (apparently) female not despite the maleness of the audience, but precisely because of it. The discourse is wholly masculine and females figure in it only insofar as they 'read' some aspect of male experience."[156] This

[151] C.J. Clover. *Men, Women and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film.* (New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1993), 50.
[152] Ibid., 51.
[153] Ibid.
[154] Ibid., 53.
[155] Ibid., 49.
[156] Ibid., 53.

is so male audience members can indulge in their own "sadomasochistic fantasies,"[157] and experience sensations that are considered feminine and therefore unsuitable for men. Through lack of other available sources of identification, the male audience are only left with the Final Girl and she must maintain the balance of masculine qualities in order to hold the audience safely with her. For Clover her masculinisation, or more specifically her phallicisation, is required not only for the audience's comfort but also "to bring her in line with the epic laws of Western narrative traditions – the very unanimity of which bears witness to the historical importance, in popular culture, of the literal representation of heroism in male form."[158] In order for the audience to be able to read the Final Girl as a hero she must be seen as masculine regardless of her body.

The importance of the female body is subjugated in Clover's analysis under how she is read by the male audience. She writes: "One is deeply reluctant to make progressive claims for a body of cinema as spectacularly nasty toward women as the slasher film is, but the fact that the slasher film does, in its own perverse way and for better or worse, constitute a visible adjustment in the terms of gender representations."[159] The progressive dimension Clover sees as promising is the identification between the male audience and a female protagonist. This is the main thrust of Clover's argument surrounding the Final Girl. The masculinity of the Final Girl allows the largely male audience to willingly be placed into a "brand of spectator experience that Hitchcock designated as 'feminine' in 1960 and has only become more so since then."[160]

As horror has developed the periods of feeling under threat, of the survivor appearing on the screen terrified, have extended. With *Psycho* (1960) Marion Crane's death happens early in the film, her moments of knowing she was in danger is mere seconds before her death. Ultimately in this film the role of hero is split between Marion's sister and her lover. There is no central survivor figure that can attract and hold the audience's identification. The active female survivor only becomes central with the development of the slasher genre. To highlight the difference, Sally, in *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974), is left to fight for her survival and her running, fleeing and frightened attempt to escape is shown throughout the last third of the film. She holds the audience's affiliation and, though she does not kill the killer herself, the

[157] Ibid.
[158] Ibid., 61.
[159] Ibid., 64.
[160] Ibid., 59.

audience do not see her rescuer. Moreover she is the last image on the screen. The Final Girl's fight for survival has grown longer, filled with fear and terror until she turns the table, but the moments that the male audience must align with her while she is in the grips of those most feminine emotions has extended.

The journey the male audience must endure, the journey through the feminine, is settled as ultimately she emerges phallicized. All the other emotions that she has experienced, and through her, the audience have experienced, pale in comparison to her triumph. For Clover this moment, the moment of her triumph when she 'mans' herself, is the key. "She is a physical female and a characterological androgyne: like her name, not masculine but either/or, both, ambiguous."[161] Clover, like Dika, ultimately describes the Final Girl as androgynous. The female body with masculine traits, who at differing points of the film alternates between feminine and masculine, creates the perfect vessel for the male audience to identify with. Yet, though Clover does designate the Final Girl as androgynous she ultimately aligns with the male audience when she is at her most active and triumphant. The androgyny proposed in Clover's argument emerges because the Final Girl does not display the feminine traits that should align with her female body. Rather she is denied full access to the male domain because of her body, and therefore she is 'designated' androgynous through her masculine alignment and female body. Once she stops screaming and fleeing, she leaves behind the last vestiges of her feminine behaviour, as "angry displays of force may belong to the male, but crying, cowering, screaming, fainting, trembling, begging for mercy belong to the female."[162] Once the Final Girl stops running and starts fighting, she is masculine aligned, her androgyny less apparent and harder to identify.

Clover writes that "The Final Girl is boyish, in a word."[163] This is manifested in her name, her sexual reluctance, her separateness from other girls and her masculine interests, and she shows practicality and competence. Clover's placing of the Final Girl in masculinity is a point that Dika also supports. Yet, as noted above, the analysis Clover and Dika undertake often is limited by the films selected, as well as by their fixation on the male audience. The female audience, and indeed older fans of the genre, are ignored in the work of Clover and Dika. Thus the assumption that horror films do not appeal to women, or that the appeal differs dramatically from that of male fans, has been largely accepted as fact. It has only

[161] Ibid., 63.
[162] Ibid., 51.
[163] Ibid., 40.

been recently with the work of Brigid Cherry and other audience scholars, such as Matt Hill, that female fans have begun to become visible. The limitations Clover and Dika have placed on their own research also limits the understanding and progressiveness of this character. This is best seen in the lack of analysis of films that sit outside the well-known slasher films, as these films would challenge many of the assumptions made by Clover and Dika about the construction of the Final Girl as masculine.

Just Before Dawn (1981) unhinges both Clover's and Dika's arguments in a number of ways, the most significant of which is that the Final Girl becomes more feminized in the seconds leading up to her final confrontation with the killer. The plot centres around a group of friends, Constance or Connie, her love interest Warren and three of their friends. The friends are on a road trip to view property that Warren has recently inherited. What they walk into, after not heeding the warnings of anyone from the area, is the territory, or more accurately the hunting grounds, of two demented twins. As is the usual with slasher films, the twins start picking off the group one by one. The Final Girl emerges in the figure of Connie. In the closing moments of the film, mourning the loss of her friend Megan, Connie emerges from her tent in a mini skirt, which she had borrowed earlier from Megan, and in full make up. Prior to this she was dressed in long pants and a button up shirt, her outfit similar to the clothing worn by Laurie in *Halloween*. Instead of staying in this garb, as Laurie does, Connie changes to her final outfit as the film progresses. At one point in the film attention is paid to her tying up her shirt so her midriff is exposed. Connie's process of feminising is one that happens gradually throughout the film so that the worse the situation the more feminine she becomes. At the moment of her final confrontation Connie is not manning herself; she is feminising herself through her clothes and make up, something that does not align with what Clover considers to be the standard for the Final Girls triumphant moments. The significance of her dress, the idea of a hero in a mini-skirt, will be explored further through the character of Buffy in chapter three. Significantly, with her feminising herself Connie is not weakened, nor is she less observant, or less aware of the danger that still exists in the woods. Warren is less observant, more affected and frightened than Connie. He requests that she put on some boots and long pants so they can leave, but she pays him no heed as she knows that the only way to make it out of the woods alive is to have one last confrontation with the killer. Minutes after she appears in her new feminine garb, they are set upon by the surviving twin.

During the struggle Connie kills the twin by forcing her arm into his throat. For this Final Girl there is no manning herself with the killer's weapon to defeat him, the only weapon she has is her body. Connie emerges victorious, covered in bodily fluids, she survives without manning herself and saves Warren in the process. The fight Connie has is also more physical than many of her counterparts of the same time period. She does not just run and scream until she is forced to fight, even when Warren thinks that the worst is over she still remains wary and alert. The physicality of her fight is one of the ways in which she subverts Clover's theory. Although the Final Girls that examined by Clover do become more active as they move through her selected films, there is still an element of passive action. This is shown through the nature of how the Final Girl fights. Within Clover's theory, the Final Girl either fells the killer herself or holds him off long enough in order for someone to intervene at the last minute. For example, Laurie in *Halloween* spends a lot of time hiding, lashing out at Michael while cowering in a closet, and at the moment that she could emerge most active, the final moments of her fight with Michael, she is rescued by Dr Loomis. The Final Girl usually fights through running and striking out when cornered. The origin of the difference in the fight between a truly active Surviving Woman and Clover's Final Girl can be seen in the fight of Connie. Connie fights hand to hand against her attacker, she defeats him herself, using her body as a weapon, and does not get rescued but rescues her boyfriend.

Another way in which Connie subverts aspects of Clover's Final Girl theory is through her relationship with Megan. They share clothes throughout the film and in one scene they are doing their make-up and nails together. This does not fit with Clover's description of the Final Girl as being apart from other girls.[164] Though Megan and Connie are very different, they are still close friends. Connie mourns the loss of Megan as is demonstrated by her donning the clothing of her friend as tribute. Unlike the traditional slasher film paradigm that focuses on the death of a female victim over a male, the deaths within *Just Before Dawn* are given reasonably equal weight. Therefore, the significance of Megan's death does not lie within the extreme visualisation of her death, but within the transformation it triggers in Connie. The friendship between these two women is a key aspect in the development of Connie from victim to survivor. This link between emotional ties and the fight of the Surviving Woman is explored deeper in chapter four of this thesis. Connie is also involved in a romantic relationship with Warren; she is interested in boys and does not shy away from

[164] Ibid.

romantic entanglements. This film is not discussed by Clover or Dika, but it clearly offers an alternative view of the Final Girl from the same period as they delineate her. If Dika and Clover had included *Just Before Dawn*, the film would have challenged, through the figure of Connie, their insistence that the Final Girl must be masculinised in order to survive. Connie has relationships, she is an intricate part of her friendship group and her appearance in the closing moment of the film actually undermines Clover's assertion that the Final Girl must emerge phallicized.

Other theorists, such as Judith Halberstam, Barbara Creed and Christine Pinedo, hold different views on what the Final Girl means or on Clover's interpretation of her function. Some see the Final Girl as castrating as opposed to castrated, different in femininity to her friends instead of masculine, or suggest she defies standard classification as masculine /feminine. Rather, they note she becomes something other. Their arguments and revisions of the Final Girl will be examined below. As the epigraph to this chapter by Barbara Creed demonstrates, there are many and varied interpretations of the female hero. It points to the significance of the character within horror, but also that film selection, application of different modes of analysis and individual interpretation alters the potential readings and meanings of this character.

Clover sees this character only as castrated and only saved by arming herself, but this process of arming negates her castration as she then becomes masculine. Her argument is that the phallic weapon is the masculine signifier of the male killer whose gender is *also* ambiguous. When he is disarmed and she takes up his weapon, she 'mans' herself through unmanning him. She takes his last claim on masculinity away from him and takes it for herself, "the Final Girl has not just manned herself; she specifically unmans an oppressor."[165] Clover and Creed utilise the same language to discuss the figure of the Final Girl, but where Clover implies the castrating aspect of the character, Creed openly explores the unmanning aspect.

Creed does not see the Final Girl as being castrated and gaining the phallus (weapon) in order to assuage male fears of castration, but ultimately, in these closing moments, as castrator. Creed writes that the slasher film purposefully arouses fear of castration; it does this "in relation to the issue of whether or not woman is castrated."[166] It does so too "by representing

[165] C.J. Clover. *Men, Women and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film.* (New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1993), 49.
[166] B. Creed, *The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis*. (New York: Routledge, 1993), 127.

woman in the twin roles of castrated and castrator, and it is the latter image which dominates the ending in almost all of these films."[167] For Creed, women are both, but ultimately it is the threat of woman as castrator that is eventually realised in the slasher film.

This is a markedly different reading of the character from Clover's. Clover only sees this character in terms of castrated who is only saved from this state through arming herself. This process of arming negates her castration and allows her to become fully masculine. It is at this point that her feminine side is negated and she belongs finally, completely to the male audience.[168] The castrating aspects of the Final Girl, in Clover's view, is completely negated by her final disavowal of her lack and through this her completion to being the audience's stand-in. As mentioned previously in this chapter, lack works within this theory as the fear that woman is really castrated, the vagina representing a wound and when the Final Girl arms herself she replaces this lack with the phallic weapon.[169] "The castration against which the male subject protects himself through disavowal and fetishism must be primarily his own,"[170] even though it is a female body on screen. The lack which she relieves through arming herself is that of the male audience's. Creed writes that the female hero during her final fight "frequently engages in castration, symbolic or literal."[171] Clover has not considered the castrating aspects of the Final Girl in any respect within her theory. The castrating aspects of the Final Girl are particularly significant as it makes viewing the Final Girl as a male stand-in harder when her actions, symbolically or literally, castrate the only physically male character of any note on the screen.

Judith Halberstam draws attention to the issues with Clover's gender binary. In *Skin Shows* Halberstam examines the film *Texas Chainsaw Massacre 2* (1986), which Clover also highlights as a prime example of the masculinity of the Final Girl. Halberstam argues against Clover's reading of the Final Girl as masculine and, instead, argues that she represents "monstrous gender."[172] Clover's reading of the horror film is to linear in its identification of femaleness in victims and maleness in monsters. Halberstam writes: "the world of female victims and male monsters remains intact in Clover's reading and only lines of identification

[167] Ibid.
[168] C.J. Clover. *Men, Women and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film.* (New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1993), 45-46.
[169] Ibid.
[170] K. Silverman, *Male Subjectivity at the Margins* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 46.
[171] B. Creed, *The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis*. (New York: Routledge, 1993), 126.
[172] J. Halberstam, *Skin Shows: Gothic Horror and the Technology of Monsters.* (North Carolina, Duke UP, 2006), 143.

and gazes shift focus."[173] In Clover's views, the only alteration is the link between masculine female and feminine male and this distinction is still made along traditional gender terms. Halberstam argues that the character Stretch "represents not boyishness or girlishness but monstrous gender, a gender that splatters, rips at the seams, and then is sutured together again as something much messier than male or female."[174] Suture is the attempt in film to make the audience forget that there is a camera mediating what the audience sees[175] and Halberstam states that classic cinema hides these sutures whereas horror draws attention to this aspect of the cinema apparatus.[176] She asserts that "the horror film makes visible the marks of suture that classic realism attempts to cover up."[177] This idea of suturing also extends to the characters of these films.

Halberstam sees Stretch emerging from her fight with Leatherface and his terrible family a new creation: "the chain saw has been sutured and grafted onto the female body rendering it a queer body of violence and power, a monstrous body that has blades, makes noise and refuses to splatter."[178] But suturing for Halberstam does not take place only with the viewer and the screen, the binaries that operate within reality can be melded and redefined through suturing within the narratives. Halberstam's evaluation of Stretch is not in terms of male/female or masculine/feminine but of a whole new creature that defies categories. The closing scenes of *Texas Chainsaw Massacre 2,* with Stretch swinging a chainsaw above her head is not the "high drag" of Clover's theory,[179] but "an intense blast of interference that messes up once and for all the generic identity codes that read femininity into tits and ass and masculinity into penises."[180] For all the possible disruption that Clover's reading could have caused she is still stuck within the gender binaries that dominate film and spectator theory. Halberstam sees that more is at work within horror film than gender identification lines being crossed, that the whole concept of gender and sex could be ripped apart and stitched back together in a new and previously unseen amalgam.

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[173] Ibid.
[174] Ibid.
[175] K. Silverman, "Suture," in *The Subject of Semiotics* ((New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 194-236.
[176] J. Halberstam, *Skin Shows: Gothic Horror and the Technology of Monsters.* (North Carolina, Duke UP, 1995), 152-153.
[177] Ibid., 55.
[178] Ibid., 160.
[179] C.J. Clover. *Men, Women and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film.* (New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1993), 59.
[180] J. Halberstam, *Skin Shows: Gothic Horror and the Technology of Monsters.* (North Carolina, Duke UP, 1995), 160.

Following on from Halberstam, Christine Pinedo sees Clover's reduction of the Final Girl's abilities to masculinity as "the impossibility of female agency."[181] Pinedo sees problems with Clover's insistence on maintaining the gender binary: "If a woman cannot be aggressive and still be a woman, then female agency is a pipe dream."[182] In Clover's work women do not act as women, but as female bodies imbued with masculinity. Female heroism is absent from Clover's analysis, women can only act in a heroic manner if they display masculine character traits. "If the surviving female can be aggressive and be *really* a woman, then she subverts this binary notion of gender that buttresses male dominance."[183] The figure of the surviving female has more progressive potential than Clover allows her. If the female survivor retains her status as woman and not as a boy in drag then she redefines heroism and dissolves the passive connotations that femininity holds.

Pinedo writes that the slasher film can be a site for feminist discourse by reframing the relationship between women and violence as "not only one of danger in which women are the objects of violence but also as a pleasurable one in which women retaliate to become agents of violence and defeat aggressors."[184] The slasher film is not just a narrative that is heavily invested in the image of the woman in danger, where women are victims and their bodies are there to be ripped and torn for the audience, but where a woman can wield a chainsaw and turn it on her attacker. Clover's formula diminishes female action and she is locked within the paradigm of masculine/active and feminine/passive. This attachment of masculine to a female body limits the potential progressiveness of Clover's argument and the innovation of the character of the Final Girl.

What Creed, Halberstam and Pinedo highlight are the issues with the notion of gender binary on which Clover's argument rests. Creed's argument for a castrating Final Girl, as opposed to a castrated one, upsets Clover's cross-gender identification as that relies on the Final Girl transitioning from signifier of female lack to bearing the phallus when she downs the killer, and as such becomes the proxy for the male audience. Pinedo and Halberstam both take issue with Clover's either/or approach to gender as Clover's argument does not make room for difference. Pinedo argues that a feminist reading of the slasher film is achievable if the

[181] I.C. Pinedo, *Recreational Terror: Women and the Pleasures of Horror Film Viewing*. (New York: State University of New York Press, 1997), 82.
[182] Ibid., 83.
[183] Ibid.
[184] Ibid., 87.

association between women and violence is re-evaluated. In contrast, Clover adheres to the idea that wielding violence in order to save oneself is aligned with the masculine and that anyone who wields it takes up a masculine position.[185] Halberstam also takes issue with Clover's insistence on maintaining the gender binaries: film, within Halberstam's argument, allows access to a world where identities and genders can be combined and new bodies can be formed. These three theorists challenge Clover's assertion of the Final Girl as proxy for the male audience member. They disrupt Clover's reading of the Final Girl as masculine, which in turn challenges her insistence that the Final Girl is a site of cross-gender identification based on her masculine qualities.

[185] C.J. Clover. *Men, Women and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film.* (New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1993), 59.

Chapter Two:

The Continuing Trouble With Final Girls.

As we have seen, Clover's ideas on the function and representation of the Final Girl attracted a lot of debate and critique from her contemporaries. Yet understanding how the Final Girl functioned in the original Slasher genre remains a much-explored topic, particularly the gender function of the Final Girl. Many different interpretations continue to be put forward as to why she survives where others do not.

Clover's idea that the Final Girl's ability to defeat the killer and triumph is linked to her masculine qualities has been directly challenged. Thus Pat Gill, in "The Monstrous Years" writes that identification with the Final Girl is not based on her masculinity, as Clover and Dika claim it to be, but on her level of maturity: "[w]hat Clover sees as androgyny in the Final Girl seems more like mature self-possession."[186] Gill attributes the Final Girl's survival to her possession of adult characteristics. Instead of her action being reduced to her masculine gender or her becoming some kind of fusion, as Halberstam proposes, Gill places the Final Girl's ability to survive on her being able to act as if she were older than her biological age. In comparison to her friends, and even the parental and authority figures within the film, she is more responsible. Gil asserts: "The final person in slasher films does not so much bend gender as age, somehow gathering into her or his character the maturity and responsibility missing in the adults."[187] An ethic of care is key to survival. This ethics of care is concerned with moral issues and "arose as an antidote to approaches that took the isolated individual as their starting point and emphasized abstract principles such as defining justice and rights."[188] Ethics of care are "focused on interpersonal relationships, stressing the particular individuals in the relationships, their needs and history."[189] An ethics of care is an important part in the construction of the Surviving Woman and will be discussed further in chapter four in relation to how emotion works to construct a female hero.

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[186] P. Gill, "The Monstrous Years: Teens, Slasher Films, and the Family," *Journal of Film and Video 54*, no. 4 (2002), 23.
[187] Ibid.
[188] J. H. Kupfer. *Feminist Ethics in Film: Reconfiguring Care Through Cinema* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2012), 2.
[189] Ibid.

The final survivor lives where others do not because of their ability to accept the adult responsibility thrust upon them. In line with Gil's position, I am not currently using any designation of sex or gender as she disregards the dominance of female final survivors. The young people within slasher films "frequently find themselves in the stressful adult role of protector."[190] The person who accepts this role and who, having given up on any help from the actual adults within these films, attempts to end the threat to their friends emerges the survivor because they fully comprehend the danger. Gill's argument challenges Clover's because the chance of survival does not increase depending on how many masculine traits the character possesses, but with how caring, responsible and mature a character is. Survivors are those "who accept the burden of setting things right, even if that means killing someone or some thing,"[191] The survivor, for Gill, is one able to handle the responsibility of keeping the world safe and to cope with the reality of death.

Gill uses as an example the *Nightmare on Elm Street* series (1984-2010). This film series is centred on parents who have gone to the extreme of murdering a child killer, Freddy Krueger, in order to protect their children. The irony of this is that their action has left their children more vulnerable for the bogeyman of the series, Freddy Krueger, has the power to invade the dreams of the children. The parents, unable to deal with what they did, try to repress the memories and, rather than admit their wrongdoing or acknowledge that their children are still in danger, in their nightmares allow their children to be killed by Freddy. Here the parents hold the key to their children's survival, but refuse to speak the truth or acknowledge the threat that the dreams pose. The responsibility for unravelling the mystery of the dream killer is placed on the children. The parents of *Nightmare on Elm Street* lack the responsibility that Gill sees as crucial to survival. Though Freddy cannot avenge himself directly on the parents, he can attack them through their children and remind them of what they did and what they have hidden from their children. In the *Nightmare on Elm Street* series the parents constantly insist that their children ignore their dreams and sleep, even going to the extreme of drugging them. The children who believe in Freddy are often deemed unstable, their parents preferring to have them hospitalised than admit their past guilt. The survivors of these films do what their parents refuse to do – they uncover the past, learn about what happened, and as a result have the power to defeat Freddy. Gill closes her argument by stating that "parents refuse to

[190] P. Gill, "The Monstrous Years: Teens, Slasher Films, and the Family," *Journal of Film and Video 54*, no. 4 (2002), 17.
[191] Ibid., 23.

commit to their children; their disinclination, work, pleasures, or addictions prevent them from taking their parental responsibilities seriously."[192] This level of parenting, or lack thereof either make for children incapable of facing life, children who try to fill the void left by their absentee parents, or "stalwart survivors of an adolescent hell who must relinquish their deficient families in order to create functioning ones of their own."[193] In *Nightmare on Elm Street* the parents are an extreme example of poor parental responsibility as it is shown in the slasher genre. They are not just absent and unable to protect their children, but in fact created the monster that is killing their children, refusing to acknowledge what they did and its consequences. Parents in other slasher films are usually less at fault, but are still featured heavily within the genre as "absent or impotent."[194] For Gill, this absence is what forces the Final Girl to be the one to take responsibility for the destruction of the killer, not her masculine qualities.

Gill's argument has many strengths, the gravitas of the final survivor is a key to their survival and separates them from the other victims. Where Gill's argument is flawed is in her claim that "by the late 1980s there were as many final boys as final girls."[195] There are some films, particularly in the *Nightmare on Elm Street* series that used male characters in the role of final survivor in order to keep things fresh, though they have never matched the girls in numbers or memorability. Other 1970s and 1980s slasher films that feature male survivors include *The Town That Dreaded Sun Down* (1976), *The Burning*, *Friday the 13th: The Final Chapter* (1984). These films are the exception to the dominance of the Final Girl and are not usually used as the key examples of the slasher era of the 1970s and 1980s. Gill's argument sees no real importance or significance with the sex or gender, the traits that the character displays being either feminine or masculine, of the final survivor. Her argument hinges on the lack of parental responsibility that is evident in the slasher era. She does critique Clover's stance on the masculinity of the Final Girl, but her argument fails to take into consideration the importance of the last female survivor. The figure of the last girl who survives the attack of the killer, and frequently takes down the killer, is so pervasive within slasher films that to ignore the central position of a female character who is the most active and the most capable

[192] Ibid., 29.
[193] Ibid.
[194] A. Lowenstein, "A Reintroduction to the American Horror Film," in *American Film History: Selected Readings, 1960 to the Present,* eds. C. Lucia, R. Grundmann & A. Simon (West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons, 2016), 272.
[195] P. Gill, "The Monstrous Years: Teens, Slasher Films, and the Family," *Journal of Film and Video,* 54, no. 4 (2002), 22.

is to devalue the significance of the slasher film's positioning of a female character in the traditionally male role of hero.

Another critic of her work, Klaus Rieser, completely disagrees with Clover's theory that the Final Girl embodies masculine characteristics. Rieser examines horror film from the perspective of its relationship with masculinity and how masculinity is constructed as something dangerous and to be feared.[196] He sees the horror genre, in particular the slasher film, as remaining "quite hegemonic" and this can be seen "in the standard punishment of sexually active women, the conflation of femininity with victimhood and fright, or the homophobic recoil from feminine men and other forms of queerness."[197] His argument revolves around examining what masculinity can mean within the horror film. Rieser disputes Clover's claim of the masculinity of the Final Girl. Rather, Rieser states that she is "lacking in traditional femininity, mostly asexual (with an androgynous name), interstitial (between a girl's world and a heterosexual one), sometimes a tomboy."[198] Rieser however acknowledges that "various, and even conflicting, interpretations are possible."[199] The slasher genre, with its "low-genre messiness and unpredictable variations" is a site for "wider critical divergence than the more slick and systematic genres."[200] Rieser's acknowledgment that his reading of the genre is as open to challenge as much as Clover's is an important issue.

Rieser notes that the actions that see Clover categorise the Final Girl as masculine, such as her technical or mechanical skills, are rarely deployed within the narrative of the films. For Rieser "the Final Girl lacks the ultimate signifier of masculinity, by holding virtually no institutional or social power."[201] For Rieser, the Final Girl is restricted in how she operates as a hero. Unlike the male hero, the Final Girl "rarely wins anything, most of the time barely surviving her ordeals…. she does not gain valuable experience…she does not gain entrance to the symbolic (access to language), and certainly, she does not get social approval in the form of 'getting'a boy."[202] The Final Girl, in Clover's argument, fails to be a convincing hero because she cannot take up her place in the patriarchal system as she lacks power and access to the symbolic. Because of this it is hard, within Rieser's argument, to read her as

[196] K. Rieser, "Masculinity and Monstrosity: Characterization and Identification in the Slasher Film," *Men and Masculinities* 3, no. 4 (2001), 390.
[197] Ibid., 389.
[198] Ibid., 377.
[199] Ibid., 375.
[200] Ibid.
[201] Ibid., 378.
[202] Ibid., 377.

masculine. Rieser sees the Final Girl's journey as preparing her for heterosexuality.[203] Rieser's argument has its limits in that the actions the Final Girl takes are not always seen as significant, or even as progressive. His focus is solely on how her masculinity is portrayed. Yet his comments on the Final Girl do add dimensions that are ignored or interpreted completely different by Clover.

Rieser sees the body of the Final Girl as "marking her as ultimately inescapably feminine."[204] Rieser asserts, much in the same way that Gill does, that the Final Girl "just cannot accept what 'at core' she already is: a good, reproductive woman, even the *eternal mother* – a soccer mum perhaps – a characterization that does not contradict her being a tough killer if she has to defend herself (or indeed her little ones) like a lioness."[205] Gill sees the Final Girl's main strength as her ability to embrace adulthood, being more able to deal with the stresses of that than the others around her. His argument is a more extreme version of Gil's, as for Rieser the role of the Final Girl is not to bend gender but to fight her way from "girlhood and full-fledged motherhood."[206] Her escape from the terrible place, the moment when she bursts forth and finds that the night has ended and her fight has finished is, for Rieser at least, the moment that she becomes a mother, she has outgrown "her intrauterine world."[207] The journey of the Final Girl, for Rieser, is not one of her gaining power but losing it, as motherhood, within a patriarchal society "is constructed as marginal or absent."[208] The power, however limited, that the Final Girl displays during her fight is lost at the moment that she accepts her role as mother.

Aspects of Clover's argument fit in with Rieser's and Gill's evaluation. Clover sees the end scene "when the Final Girl stands at last in the light of day with the knife in her hand, she has delivered herself into the adult world."[209] This corresponds with Rieser's and Gill's argument that the Final Girl fight is one into adulthood but, as noted, Clover focuses on the masculine and feminine aspects of this emergence. Rieser concludes: "the Final Girl is modern but not too modern, tough but not too tough, sexy but chaste…she is clearly kept in line with the

[203] Ibid., 377-378.
[204] Ibid., 378.
[205] Ibid.
[206] Ibid., 379.
[207] Ibid.
[208] E. A. Kaplan, "The Case of the Missing Mother: Maternal Issues in Vidor's *Stella Dallas*" in *Issues in Feminist Film Criticism,* ed. P. Erens (Indiana: Indiana UP, 1990), 129
[209] C.J. Clover. *Men, Women and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film.* (New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1993), 49.

adolescent male's level of acceptability."[210] For Rieser there is very little that can be interpreted as progressive in the figure of the Final Girl. In his interpretation of her she does little to challenge hegemonic masculinity, she is not a threat to the male viewer and therefore her impact as a "revolutionary" figure is severely limited.[211] He even goes so far as to argue that she fights to thwart any threat or challenge to hegemonic masculinity: "she does not turn these weapons against normative masculinity but against the border-breaking monster that is threatening hegemonic gender relations."[212] This claim is weakened by the distinctively human aspect of the killer. "The killer is with few exceptions recognizably human and distinctly male,"[213] the antagonist of the slasher genre is not a supernatural monster, nor an alien creature. Rather they are human in appearance, many of the villains of the original Slasher era have become supernatural in sequels but they still retain their physical human condition. As the contemporary slasher film has developed, this idea of the human monster in Rieser's argument has lost its valency. As I show in this thesis, it is the human nature of these killers that makes them so frightening, the way they could be anybody and how they have increasingly become represented as the boyfriend, the friendly security guard and the trusted sheriff. Rieser does not even consider the castrating aspects of the Final Girl and the threat that this knife wielding, unmanning, triumphant woman poses to masculinity. In his attempt to highlight what he sees as the inherent condensing of hegemonic masculinity within the horror genre, he discounts many revolutionary aspects of the genre and of the character of the Final Girl. There are yet other theorists who have challenged Clover's argument without discounting the importance of the active female figure that acts as the hero of the genre.

Sarah Trencansky for example critiques Clover's fixation on the virginal aspect of the Final Girl. Trencansky does not see the Final Girl's lack of relationships as being as important as Clover claims it is. For Clover it is further proof that the Final Girl is ultimately masculine, for Trencansky the single status of the Final Girl "is surely beside the point; a heterosexual relationship cannot 'prove' femininity for a female film character any more than a meaningful relationship is expected to prove a male action star's masculine agency."[214]

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[210] K. Rieser, "Masculinity and Monstrosity: Characterization and Identification in the Slasher Film," *Men and Masculinities* 3, no. 4 (2001), 380.
[211] Ibid.
[212] Ibid., 377.
[213] C.J. Clover. *Men, Women and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film.* (New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1993), 42.
[214] S. Trencansky, "Final Girls and Terrible Youths: Transgression in 1980s Slasher Horror," *Journal of Popular Film & Television* 29 (Summer 2001), 67.

Trencansky argues that the Final Girl should not have to be in a heterosexual relationship in order to be considered feminine and that the fixation on her lack of sexualisation detracts from her potential as a representation of feminine power. The relationship status of the Final Girl is an aspect of Clover's argument that has had too much emphasis placed upon it. The Final Girl's relationship status should not be evidence of her feminine or masculine alliance, nor should it play a part in her ability to act as a hero. The Final Girl, in Clover's evaluation, is not feminine because she refuses to date. Trencansky, on the other hand, argues that this is a meaningless way of determining the level of a character's femininity or masculinity. *Scream* and those slasher films that followed allowed for a Final Girl who had romantic relationships while still maintaining her ability to fight and survive.

One of the issues that repeatedly emerges in criticism of Clover's thinking is her choice of Final Girls. By adhering to what are considered well-known or popular films she limits the scope of her readings. Clover's method of analysis, her selection of films and the statistics she gathered about who was watching or renting select films, has also garnered criticism. Halberstam, for example, writes: "Clover carried out impromptu and casual surveys of local video stores in order to acquire information about who watched what within the genre of horror."[215] Alhough she acknowledges that Clover is fully aware of the many issues with this approach to audience studies, this does not change the fact that it is quite a fragile foundation to build an argument on. Clover's statistical gathering techniques aside, other issues arise from criticism of how Clover uses the films she discusses.

Thus Kyle Christensen critiques Clover's focus on Laurie Strode, from the *Halloween* series. Christensen begins his study by first mentioning that "the Final Girl is inherently a feminist figure,"[216] but this is a direct contradiction to Clover's insistence that to view the Final Girl as such is a "grotesque expression of wishful thinking."[217] Clover's focus is not on the feminist connotations of the Final Girl, but on how her character alters theories of cross-gender identification. Specifically, as we have seen, Clover is focused on how male audience members willingly place themselves in the hands of a female (albeit masculine) hero. The primary purpose of Christensen's argument is to highlight how Clover's favouring of Laurie

[215] J. Halberstam, *Skin Shows: Gothic Horror and the Technology of Monsters.* (North Carolina, Duke UP, 1995), 144.
[216] K. Christensen, "'The Final Girl versus Wes Craven's *A Nightmare on Elm Street,*" *Studies in Popular Culture* 34 (Fall 2011), 24.
[217] C.J. Clover. *Men, Women and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film.* (New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1993), 53.

puts another, and in his view more appropriate and capable Final Girl, in the shadows. Christensen writes that Laurie Strode is considered "to be the superlative model of feminism in the slasher genre,"[218] but he wishes to replace Laurie with Nancy from *Nightmare on Elm Street*, as he considers her to be "the stronger model of feminism in classical slasher horror cinema."[219] Nancy is also used by Christensen to argue that the "Final Girl can be a feminist character if altered slightly."[220] However Christensen's view fails to take into consideration the differences within the films from which these two characters emerge, as well as the years that separate Laurie and Nancy. Nancy owes her existence to Laurie, just as Laurie owes her existence to Sally from the *Texas Chainsaw Massacre.*

Moreover Christensen sees nothing progressive in Laurie as a Final Girl. Rather, he sees in Laurie's role is the epitome of "the core characteristics of the oppressive 'cult of womanhood' which restricted the actions of many women during the nineteenth century."[221] He argues that she actually embodies "the four cardinal virtues of a 'true woman'…purity, piety, submissiveness, and domesticity."[222] The aspects of Laurie that make her an ideal Final Girl in Clover's theory are seen in Christensen's model to be negative. The driving force of Christensen's argument is to place Nancy as "arguably the first and best model of feminism in the classical slasher film,"[223] and he treats Nancy as the most progressive and feminist aligned Final Girl of the 1980s slasher era. Christensen goes on to argue that the way to reading feminism in the horror film, particularly the slasher film, needs to be done through Nancy instead of Laurie.

As stated earlier Christensen's fixation on Nancy as the epitome of a feminist hero within the slasher genre does not take into consideration that this character relies on all the Final Girls that have come before her. Clover, for example, points out that there was a shift from *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* to *Halloween* and its portrayal of passive to active Final Girls. Christensen acknowledges that Clover points to the increasing prominence of gritty Final Girls[224] however that does not discourage him from seeing this lack of exploration of other Final Girls as the greatest weakness in Clover's argument and its applicability to feminism.

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[218] K. Christensen, "'The Final Girl versus Wes Craven's *A Nightmare on Elm Street," Studies in Popular Culture* 34 (Fall 2011), 24.
[219] Ibid.
[220] Ibid., 27.
[221] Ibid., 29.
[222] Ibid.
[223] Ibid., 30.
[224] Ibid., 29-30.

Another issue that was mentioned earlier is the nature of the films that these Final Girls inhabit. *Nightmare on Elm Street* is a film that takes the slasher formula and innovates it by including the dream aspect. The young people in the *Nightmare* series do not get hunted in their suburbs and homes directly, but in their dreams. Through its innovation it pays homage to its slasher roots but ultimately becomes something more than a slasher film, incorporating aspects of supernatural horror into the formula. Nancy must fight differently to Laurie in order to survive because her attacker is different. The standard physical assault by the Final Girl in the last stand-off between her and the killer is unable to be played out within *Nightmare on Elm Street* because of the incorporeal nature of Freddy, therefore the final conflict between Nancy and Freddy must be approached differently. Christensen writes that Nancy "uses her mind and willpower (as opposed to pugnacious violence) to rise above Freddy,"[225] and he see this less violent approach as making her a more feminist Final Girl. Christensen's argument seems to deny women the ability to wield "pugnacious violence" and still maintain the right to be called feminist.[226] Christensen does not attempt to re-evaluate the connection between women and violence, instead his argument maintains that women should not wield violence and that using violence exiles women from their claim on feminism.

The reasons that Christensen gives for his claim of Nancy as a feminist Final Girl is that she "is not afraid of men…does not subscribe to the sanctity of the domestic sphere, defying the reign of her insensible and alcoholic mother…uses the power of her alert, paranoid mind and will (not violence) to defeat Freddy."[227] The issue with Nancy's final fight with Freddy, and how she expels him from the narrative, lies in the fact that Freddy is essentially a nightmare version of Tinkerbell. Within the story of *Peter Pan*, the fairy Tinkerbell is brought back to life through the power of belief.[228] Freddy Kreuger, on the other hand, dies from a lack of belief. His power lies in fear, for if his victims stop fearing him or believing in him, he loses his power. The only way to defeat him is to stop treating him like a threat. This is not going to work in the world Laurie inhabits. Because Laurie and Nancy are different does not mean that they are any less valued or de-valued in their role as hero. Thus to claim that one character's actions are not as admirable as another does not help the feminist argument as it falls into the trap of pitting women, even if they are fictional women, against each other. This approach only excludes difference and limits how women are allowed to act on screen.

[225] Ibid., 39.
[226] Ibid.
[227] Ibid., 30-31.
[228] J.M. Barrie, *Peter Pan.* (1904; reis., London: Pan MacMillan, 2014)

Christensen does not find any issue with how *Nightmare on Elm Street* interprets the slasher genre, and in fact one could be inclined to think that this is why Clover does not deal in-depth with this film as it raises more questions about the genre than it resolves. *Nightmare on Elm Street* is a film that deploys more supernatural and fantasy elements than a more traditional slasher film. Clover does briefly mention Nancy, stating that she is "the grittiest of the Final Girls"[229] she suggests "this film is complicated by the fact that the action is envisaged as a living dream."[230]

Nancy is a further step in the progression from Clover's Final Girl to today's Surviving Woman, but as has been mentioned earlier, she is not the only Final Girl that has been overlooked by Clover. Connie from *Just Before Dawn* displays more alignment with the feminine than other Final Girls whilst still featuring a traditional setting of a slasher film. However, Connie and many other Final Girls are ignored because the films that they feature in are little known because of limited release or straight to video. These films have largely disappeared behind the classic films of the original slasher era and as such the female protagonists that they feature have also largely disappeared. The limits are placed on the film choices made by Clover and Dika diminish the progressive potential of the Final Girl. Even Christensen's method does not move away from this selective, mainstream approach as *Nightmare on Elm Street* is one of the best-known of the slasher era.

One aspect of the character of Nancy is a key feature of Clover's Final Girl. The Final Girl is "watchful to the point of paranoia; small signs of danger that her friends ignore, she registers."[231] Clover does not go into detail about the significance of this aspect of the Final Girl rather it is just one trait that marks her as different from the others. Halberstam also notes comments on this aspect of the survivor of horror films: "the women who are not worried about being watched within the horror film very often die."[232] Being mindful of their surroundings, noticing subtle changes and being vigilant helps them stay alive, and those who do not are quickly killed. This watchfulness, for Clover, is what separates the Final Girl from other characters, but also what draws her closer to the masculine. Halberstam however argues that the fear felt by the heroine is productive and necessary for survival, "productive fear

[229] C.J. Clover. *Men, Women and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film.* (New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1993), 38.
[230] Ibid., 38n.
[231] Ibid., 39.
[232] J. Halberstam, *Skin Shows: Gothic Horror and the Technology of Monsters.* (North Carolina, Duke UP, 1995), 126.

which marks the female…as a subject who watches as well as a subject who is watched. But the woman must also listen."[233] Jonathan Markovitz draws on Halberstam's theory to examine *Nightmare on Elm Street* through this lens. Markovitz writes that, "paranoia is not just an analytic tool – in horror films, as in reality, survival can be dependent on an accurate assessment of the horrors surrounding you."[234] But because fear is the impetus of this level of paranoia, or watchfulness, and fear is associated with the feminine – Halberstam writes that "fear…is gendered"[235] – this undermines Clover's association between the Final Girl and masculinity.

Markovitz's aim is to expand on Halberstam's examination of female paranoia and examine how this paranoia is gained by the Final Girl. Nancy is once again the Final Girl of choice as the best example of this paranoia of the classic slasher era. Paranoia is a process within the narrative which is developed over the course of the film. Markovitz argues that Nancy's female friend, Tina, does not have a chance to develop this paranoia fully. Tina is easily thwarted by her male friends from fully exploring the fears that her nightmares are causing. The male friends trivialise her nightmares and as a result she stops exploring the threat that they contain. Markovitz proposes that the insight Tina is denied shows that "paranoia is acquired in stages, as part of a process."[236] Tina's death allows Nancy to fully realise her own survival paranoia. "While paranoia may well be a survival mechanism in horror films, Tina's death suggests that it must be paid for in blood,"[237] the Final Girl, using her watchfulness and her burgeoning paranoia, learns from every death that happens in the lead up to her final confrontation with the killer. Markovitz's argument disassociates the watchfulness of Clover's theory from the eventual masculine position that Clover sees the Final Girl holds. For Markovitz, fear operates as a survival mechanism and is central to "any consideration of the ways in which horror films subvert or expose misogyny."[238]

All these arguments add to how the Final Girl is perceived within current film theory, much of which is still invested in the meanings that can be derived from classic slasher films

[233] Ibid., 127.
[234] J. Markovitz, "Female Paranoia as Survival Skill: Reason or Pathology in Nightmare on Elm Street," *Quarterly Review of Film and Video 17,* no. 3 (2000), 213.
[235] J. Halberstam, *Skin Shows: Gothic Horror and the Technology of Monsters.* (North Carolina, Duke UP, 2006), 108.
[236] J. Markovitz, "Female Paranoia as Survival Skill: Reason or Pathology in Nightmare on Elm Street," *Quarterly Review of Film and Video 17,* no. 3 (2000), 216.
[237] Ibid., 216-217.
[238] Ibid., 219.

instead of contemporary films. All these theories offer revisions and critiques of a character type, though they all add to the Final Girl as she is featured in the classic era of slasher films between 1970s and 1980s. Many of the changes that have occurred on screen continue to be overlooked by theorists who remain attached to alternate readings of the Final Girl in the original incarnation of this character. Those who discuss Clover's theory focus on the diverse readings that the Final Girl can produce, as well as the gaps and omissions that feature in Clover's theory. There has not been that much work on what the Final Girl has become in contemporary films, particularly the rebirth of the slasher film in the 1990s through *Scream* (1996) and the films that followed. In actuality, the revival of the slasher has added many dimensions to the character of the Final Girl, which are important to consider because they demonstrate that the character is not fixed, that the slasher genre is still developing and therefore readings of this genre are never complete. These new additions to the slasher genre need to be considered when discussing what constitutes the Final Girl and how she functions as feminine, masculine or neither.

Scream reworked the standard slasher formula and introduced a new audience to the rules and structure of the genre. *Scream* itself however did not adhere to this formula but subverted it. The structure of *Scream* is designed to let the audience in on how the movie is meant to proceed, then it twists audience expectations. The film, and the series that followed, is classified as a postmodern horror, a meta-horror, that is aware that its audience knows the rules (or it teaches the rules to those who do not know them) and plays along with that knowledge and then frustrates audience expectations. *Scream* created a mini revival of slasher films in the late 1990s and early 2000s, *Scream* remaining the most successful and most playful of this revival. The theory that has developed around *Scream* has looked at how it redefined how gender operated in the horror film, through its use of postmodernist thought and its self-aware aspects. These films are essential to a reading of the development of the Final Girl because they opened the Final Girl up to a reinvention.

The first *Scream* film centred on a group of friends in the town of Woodsboro. This quaint little suburb becomes the site of a murder spree. The focal point of the film is a teenage girl, Sidney Prescott, who is presented like the Final Girls of the 1970s and 1980s, but differs from them in a number of significant ways. Unlike Clover's Final Girl, Sidney is not separate or markedly different from her friends, she is not masculinised, she is smart but does not show any mechanical or technical skills, she is virginal but this changes during the film and

loss of her virginity does not weaken her or cause her to be a victim. As Valerie Wee states: "Sidney is an ordinary high school girl: she is popular, she has a boyfriend, and a group of close knit friends."[239] In this she contrasts with the traits that Clover believes the traditional Final Girl upholds.

Scream also departed from the standard theory and assumptions made about the audience of the slasher film being predominantly male adolescents. In fact it also altered the standard dynamic of the largely male-adolescent audience. Cherry writes that the president of Miramax studios was surprised that the audiences for *Scream 2* (1992) "were more than 50% female."[240] The *Scream* series (1996-2006) changed how theorists, and studio executives, saw slasher film audiences. Wee writes that teenage girls were targeted as the ideal audience for these films: "if young males were the target audience for the slasher genre in the past, the young female emerged as the ideal(ized) target audience at the box office in the 1990s."[241] *Scream* attracted this female audience due to the issues dealt with in the narrative: "The films' plots essentially examine issues of trust in romantic relationships," and the turmoil of teenage existence, particularly female adolescent issues, are explored through the framework of a slasher film. The danger of the slasher film acts as an extreme parable for the dangers of teen life.[242] Like the television series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, which used the role of being a vampire slayer, the only line of defence between demons and the world is used to suggest that high school is hell.[243] *Scream* and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* take the extremes of the horror genre and use it to explore issues that particularly relate to the lives of teenage girls. Issues of trust, love and betrayal, the fears of teenage girls are all explored in the narrative of *Scream*. Sidney finds out that her boyfriend is really a psychotic killer moments after she loses her virginity to him. This represents a betrayal of Sidney's trust and speaks to the fears of many girls who worry about what will happen when they lose their virginity and how they will be treated. It also dramatizes the unconscious fear that the one you love is really a monster in disguise.

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[239] V. Wee. 'Resurrecting and Updating the Teen Slasher: The Case of Scream', *Journal of Popular Film and Television*, 32, no. 2 (2006), 58.
[240] B. Cherry, *Horror* (London, Routledge, 2009), 42.
[241] V. Wee. 'Resurrecting and Updating the Teen Slasher: The Case of Scream', *Journal of Popular Film and Television*, 32, no. 2 (2006), 60.
[242] Ibid.
[243] T. Little. **"***High School is Hell***":** *Metaphor Made Literal* in Buffy the Vampire Slayer," in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer and Philosophy: Fear and Trembling in Sunnydale*, ed. J. B. South (Chicago: Open Court, 2003), 282-293.

This emphasis on issues that concern teenage girls played a major role in the success of *Scream*. Wee asserted that "It is clear that *Scream*'s female-oriented perspective contributed to its box office success."[244] Women have a tendency to see films in groups and multiple times, particularly if the film speaks to issues that concern them. Evidence of the film's appeal to a female audience, and the different ways in which female audiences take part in the movie-going experience, is shown in a newspaper report about the film's success:

> Typically, only about 1% of moviegoers will pay to see a film more than once. With *Scream*, an estimated 16% of women age 25 and under who saw the film in theatres went more than once, according to polling by Miramax. By comparison, only 3% of young men who saw *Scream* returned for additional screenings.[245]

A large portion of the appeal of *Scream* to teenage girls can rest with one of the film's survivors, Sidney. When Sidney is faced with the betrayal by her boyfriend moments after losing her virginity, she does not weaken or crumble, instead "she learns self-reliance and independence and successfully overcomes the numerous events that threaten her." This moment offers a "particularly empowering message for teenage girls."[246]

Sexual purity was once one of the hallmarks of the Final Girl. Her purity, according to Clover, helped to associate her with masculinity as she was reluctant, or just plain uninterested, in penetration. Her reluctance to be penetrated also helped to maintain the illusion that she had the potential to gain the phallus and if she was to lose her virginity she would never be able to fulfil her role of audience (male) stand-in. The sexual purity of Sidney Prescott is irrelevant. The loss of her virginity does not impede her success as a survivor. She is not weakened by the act, but rather she is angered by the fact that she has been betrayed and this anger becomes the impetus of her fight.

Anger is a recurring theme in contemporary representations of the Surviving Woman and will be explored in chapter four. Anger has become a more central aspect of the Surviving Woman and it can be seen in its early development by Sidney's reaction to her betrayal. Sidney is not punished for her loss of virginity, the only person who is punished for the betrayal and loss is her boyfriend, Billy. Wee writes: "in keeping with conventions, Sidney is

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[244] V. Wee. 'Resurrecting and Updating the Teen Slasher: The Case of Scream', *Journal of Popular Film and Television*, 32, no. 2 (2006), 60.
[245] J. Weeks, "*Scream* Movies Cultivate Special Audience: Girls," *USA Today,* 12 December, 1997.
[246] Ibid.

consequently attacked and victimized. Yet, against the established rules, she escapes post-coital death and manages to overcome the villains."[247] Also against the standard of the traditional slasher, she is not punished in any subsequent sequels. An argument could be made that Sidney is not attacked because she loses her virginity, but because the killer's plans had finally come to fruition. Everyone else has been eliminated, or so the killers think, and Sidney and her father are the only two left. Taking Sidney's virginity was Billy's last attempt to break her before he kills her. Sidney however does not break and instead turns the tables on Billy and his accomplice. The character of Sidney undermines Clover's theory, the Final Girl is not meant to be penetrated, even if Clover asserts that "penetration, it seems constructs the female,"[248] and in Clover's theory the Final Girl must distance herself from any association with femaleness if she wants to survive.

Scream fails to adhere to Clover's characteristics in another way, for traditionally the Final Girl is "the last person left alive at the end of the film."[249] *Scream* provides the viewer with two surviving women, Sidney and Gale Weathers. Gale is a reporter who covers the murders. She is the antithesis of even the most radical of Final Girls, "she is career orientated, selfish, vain, ambitious, and largely amoral."[250] Her characteristics are not those that usually end up victorious; traditionally she would be one of the first victims. She does not die, however, and teams up with Sidney to defeat the killers. Gale does not only survive the first instalment of the *Scream* series, but continues to survive the whole series. Slasher films of the original period almost always allowed for only a lone female survivor and her heroism "was defined in terms of Final Girl's ability to survive and escape numerous attacks than in her ability to triumph independently over her tormentor(s)."[251] Her inability, with some exceptions, to actually actively fight back stopped her from being able to save others. Sidney and Gale both fight against their attackers in an active way, they also protect others and save some would-be victims. These two characters thwart the motif of the lone survivor rule of Clover's Final Girl.

[247] Ibid., 58.
[248] C.J. Clover. *Men, Women and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film.* (New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1993), 93.
[249] V. Wee. 'Resurrecting and Updating the Teen Slasher: The Case of Scream', *Journal of Popular Film and Television*, 32, no. 2 (2006), 58.
[250] Ibid., 59.
[251] Ibid., 58.

These two women break away from many of traits attached to the traditional Final Girl: "These Final Girls save themselves, and each other, without acquiring any monstrous connotations. More important, with the exception of Sidney's androgynous name neither one is marked as particularly boyish nor are they actively differentiated from the other women in the film."[252] They survive together, they actively fight, Sidney actually turns the killer's game around on them, they do not become monstrous in their violence like the title character of *Carrie* (1976), they are not virginal, they do not particularly stand out from the crowd, nor are they masculinised. The *Scream* series offers the beginning of the new type of Surviving Woman that is the focus of this thesis. Sidney acts as the starting point for subverting and revising what qualifies a Surviving Woman as the hero of the slasher genre.

Scream does not just differ in its representation of survivors; the killer of these films is not the same as the killer of the 1970s and 1980s slasher era. Clover writes: "the killers are normally the fixed elements and the victims the changeable ones in any given series."[253] *Scream* places Sidney and Gale, as well as a third survivor Dewey, as the fixed element. "The fact that these Final Girls survive through all three instalments is significant and represents a clear deviation from the traditional slasher movie convention of killing the Final Girl in each subsequent sequel."[254] Wee's analysis acknowledges the legacy of the original slasher era and the Final Girls that featured in these films. However, her statement shows a clear shift from the previous era, much like Clover saw a shift between *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* and *Halloween*.[255] This indicates that the genre constantly undergoes refinement and redefinition. *Scream* breaks with tradition in this respect and moves further away with its depiction of the killer.

In the traditional slasher film series, the character who endured throughout the series was the killer. Freddy, Jason and Michael repeatedly came back from the dead. These killers become increasingly more supernatural as their film franchises continued: "the traditional slasher villain is infinitely revivable, effectively eluding death and destruction indefinitely."[256]

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[252] Ibid., 59.
[253] C.J. Clover. *Men, Women and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film.* (New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1993), 30.
[254] V. Wee. 'Resurrecting and Updating the Teen Slasher: The Case of Scream', *Journal of Popular Film and Television*, 32, no. 2 (2006), 59
[255] C.J. Clover. *Men, Women and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film.* (New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1993), 37.
[256] V. Wee. 'Resurrecting and Updating the Teen Slasher: The Case of Scream', *Journal of Popular Film and Television*, 32, no. 2 (2006), 55.

Freddy in *Nightmare on Elm Street* begins the films dead, his physical body destroyed by a vigilante mob as the prelude to the film beginning. Jason, a boy who died while at a camp in Crystal Lake when he was ten years old, returns from his watery grave to avenge his mother's death at the end of the first film in the series. He rises again and again over the twelve films to date. Jason is dealt many killing blows from many of the last survivors over the films, he has survived hell (*Freddy goes to Hell: The Final Friday* 1993) and space (*Jason X* 2001), and his body just continuously regenerates. Michael Myers, the original slasher killer, has suffered many fatal wounds over the course of his filmic journey (1978-2009). Conversely, the killers in the *Scream* series change with each new film, they do not come back to life and their deaths are permanent. They are human and, as such, are destructible, this is one of the biggest departures from the traditional slasher era. The mask and costume remain the same, but those that wear it changes with each film. These human killers also differ in how they are portrayed: "the traditional villains are almost consistently characterized as psychotic, virtually indestructible maniacs,"[257] they are constructed as the outsiders of society. The villains of *Scream* "are not misfits or outsiders, nor are they uncharacterized monsters typical of early slasher films."[258] Instead they are part of the group that Sidney occupies. They are "boyfriends or friends who initially appear harmless until they go on a killing spree."[259] The killers could be anywhere or anyone and this is the fear that *Scream* taps into. Placing the killer in the role of someone close to the Surviving Woman ties in with feminist uncovering of the threat that women face from male figures within their home. The slasher genre has always highlighted the false security of the family home by placing the threat within the suburb, but *Scream* takes it a step further and emphasises the idea discussed in *Femicide: The Politics of Woman Killing* that it is not a stranger entering the home who is the primary threat but the people you view as friends and partners. Jill Radford writes:

> "It is ironic that the place where women should expect to feel safest -their own home – is the place where they are least safe from lethal sexual violence when they share that home with a man. Also ironic is the fact that it is those men whom women are encouraged to trust and look to for love and protection who pose the greatest risk, be they husbands, lovers, or former husbands or lovers."[260]

[257] Ibid., 54.
[258] Ibid., 55.
[259] Ibid.
[260] J. Radford. "Introduction" in *Femicide: The Politics of Woman Killling*, eds. J. Radford & D. E. H. Russell (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1992), 77

Part of the function of the slasher film is to offer a reflection of societal fears. The completely human killer who inhabits these films represents the acceptance within today's society of the everyday person who is a serial killer, the person who secretly plans a mass murder. It also incorporates the feminist acknowledgment and uncovering that the true threat to the majority of women are those men to whom they are closest.

"Rather than build a series around an indestructible monster who constantly returns to wreak more destruction on new groups of women in each new cinematic instalment, the creators of the *Scream* films have broken with tradition and chosen to highlight the strength, power, and resilience of the female survivors."[261] Not all recent horror films go on to have sequels, obviously, or feature the same characters from the first film if they do, and what *Scream* has created was a subversion of audience expectations and what a rewriting of the slasher genre. *Scream*'s self-awareness of its audience and of the history of the genre it belongs to can be seen in the sequel, *Scream 2*. The opening scene of this film takes place in a cinema where a screening of the film *Stab* is taking place. This film-within-a-film is based on the events that took place in *Scream*. The scenes they show are filled with bad acting and cheesy lines, an overt referencing of the straight to VHS b-grade horror films, a category which many of the films of the 1970s and 1980s Slasher films belong to. People in the audience watching *Stab* are wearing the *Scream* killer's mask and chasing each other with knives. This section of the film is about the public image of horror film fans. This is obvious when the first victim of the new killer stumbles through the crowd, bleeding and hurt, and this goes unwitnessed until it is too late. The *Scream* films are films all about film as medium. In *Scream*, Randy, one of Sidney's friends, explains the rules of the genre and in *Scream 2* he explains the rules of sequels. This intertextuality is used to lure the audience into a false sense of security, leaving them unprepared for the disruption of what the audience has been taught about the film genre. *Scream* has taken on a once predictable genre, based on very strict rules and predictability and established that there are no rules to the genre.

Horror since *Scream* has featured more active female survivors who do not need to 'man' themselves in order to emerge victorious. These new survivors have the ability to save others, displaying real heroism and they take the fight to their attacker, playing the killer's game on her terms. The killers are also different from those of the original slasher era; they are more human, psychotic but not monstrously so. They do not appear different and it is only rarely

[261] Ibid., 59.

that they rise up from the dead. As Kevin J. Wetmore writes, "there has not been a genuine 'final girl' since *Scream*."[262] He attributes the decline of the Final Girl to a growing sense of nihilism and evil that wins time and time again within American horror since 9/11. He writes that "one key difference between pre-9/11 and post-9/11 horror is that the former frequently allows for hope and the latter frequently does not."[263] The Final Girl, for Wetmore, seems to be symbolic of this hope. He does not allow for the character to have developed along with this darkness. If one is still looking for Final Girls of old, then this statement is in fact quite correct. If however one is looking for growth and development of a character type then she can still be easily found on screen. All of the changes *Scream* began have continued and this is reflected in the female survivors who have featured in recent decades.

Clover does not see anything particularly progressive about slasher films outside of the idea that male viewers are willing to align themselves with a female body in danger. *Scream* began a shift in horror films that started to speak to women, and this has continued. *The Woman (*2011) shows progress in the feminist politics in horror films. The film is about a seemingly average, well off upper-middle class family. The patriarch of this family finds a wild woman in the woods behind his home, captures her and ties her in his basement. She is presented to his family, his wife and their three children, as the family project. This film can be read as feminist through its concern with showing the events of the film through the eyes of the female characters. The oldest daughter and the wild woman are particular points of empathy within the film. As Rjurik Davidson writes, "our empathy is relentlessly focused on the wild woman – and the other women in the movie – from the beginning."[264] The wild woman does not show fear, but resistance, when at last she is set free she seeks revenge and does not run. Instead she seeks out her captors and is shown as "independent and powerful" (46). In the closing moments of the film she is shown freeing the daughters from the oppression and tyranny of their father. Instead of focusing on the journey of the wild woman from weak to strong through embracing masculine traits, as Clover's Final Girls do, the wild woman is strong from the outset, she has no need to man herself.

The films *Scream* and *The Woman* highlight how the audience has shifted from Clover and Dika's emphasis on the male audience as the target demographic for horror. As mentioned earlier, *Scream* was a surprising hit with teenage girls and this led to a change in marketing

[262] K. J. Wetmore *Post 9/11 Horror In America Cinema* (New York: Continuum, 2012), 199.
[263] Ibid., 2.
[264] R. Davidson, "You are Sick! This is Not Art!" *Overland,* 125 (Summer 2011), 46.

campaigns. When shown at Sundance, *The Woman* inspired a very oppositional reaction from a male member of the audience who was horrified by what he perceived to be nothing but blatant misogyny. The surprising reaction to this male audience member's claims of misogyny was that women in the audience challenged this claim and defended the film.[265] Horrified by the violence being portrayed in this film, the male audience member tried to garner support for his position but was met with the response "are you a woman?" from a female member of the audience. When director, Lucky McKee, took to the stage, women stood in preparation to defend him.[266] What these audience reactions to the film shows is what *Scream* began and that is that the slasher film, and other subgenres of horror, have exposed the threat that the everyday husband, father or brother can be hiding a misogynistic violence that could explode at any time. *Scream* and *The Woman* both contribute to a new approach to understanding the horror film audience, women are attending horror films and they are finding positive images on the screen. The once believed to be deeply misogynistic genre has begun to appeal to women in a much larger way. Rhona Berenstein has argued that, "horror cinema…is a genre that has been the subject of fairly rigid gendered assumptions when it comes to spectatorship."[267] This is the trap that Clover and Dika fall into. Female audiences have gained in numbers and the increase in home viewing makes it difficult to know how many women watch in the comfort of their own homes. However, as the incredible amount of female theorists who write on the genre can attest to, women have been interested in horror since the genre began. Marketing campaigns for classic horror of the 1930s focused on the female viewer. Because women were considered to have more free time and the cinema was both a social occasion and a consumer activity, films were marketed to them as they had their husband's incomes and the time to attend matinees. As a result of this, women in the 1930s made "a significant viewing force."[268] If women could withstand the film then in was considered safe and "could be seen by all patrons."[269] Women were also participants in marketing stunts and were the favoured audience for exhibitors (129). Cherry argues that there are women who enjoy horror films, but that societal expectations about how women are meant to react to frightening or violent images forces them to hide their attraction to the genre and often they view horror in the comfort of their own home instead of the

[265] Ibid.
[266] Ibid., 42
[267] R. J. Berenstein, "'It Will Thrill You, It May Shock You, It Might Even Horrify You': Gender, Reception, and Classic Horror Cinema" in *The Dread Of Difference*, ed. B. K. Grant (Austin: Texas UP, 1996), 118.
[268] Ibid.
[269] Ibid., 129.

cinema.[270] *The Woman* and *Scream* both demonstrate women are no longer hiding their enjoyment of the genre, thus subverting aspects of Clover's theory which rests on the identification of the Final Girl with the male adolescent.

The gaze is an important aspect of Clover's theory. Clover challenges the claim that the male audience member identifies with the male on screen and that women function as object to this gaze. The theory of the male gaze was developed by Laura Mulvey in the seminal essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema." Film operates as a sight of voyeuristic pleasure for the audience. The darkness of the theatre combine with the disregard for the audience presence by the actors within the film "give the viewer an illusion of looking in on a private world."[271] For Mulvey there is a "sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female."[272] Within this theory women "are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote *to-be-looked-at-ness.*"[273] Women do not contribute to the moving forward of a narrative but rather "work against the development of story-line, to freeze the flow of action in moments of erotic contemplation."[274] According to Mulvey, the male audience member identifies with the male protagonist with the result that "he projects his look onto that of his like, his screen surrogate, so that the power of the male protagonist as he controls events coincides with the active power of the erotic look."[275] This gives the male audience member a sense of omnipotence. Mulvey states that the male protagonist is not gazed at as an "erotic object of the gaze,"[276] but rather as a "more perfect, more complete, more powerful ideal ego conceived in the original moment of recognition in front of the mirror."[277] The function of the male protagonist is the same as the moment within the mirror stage, where the perceived image is more in control and powerful than the spectator (20). Female characters have no power within the narrative outside of their status as object, male

[270] B. Cherry, 'Refusing to Refuse To Look' in *Identifying Hollywood's Audiences: Cultural Identity and the Movies,* ed. M. Stokes and R Maltby (London: British Film Institute, 1999), 192.
[271] L. Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" in *Visual and Other Pleasures* (Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 1989), 17.
[272] Ibid., 19.
[273] Ibid.
[274] Ibid.
[275] Ibid., 20.
[276] Ibid.
[277] Ibid.

spectators identify with the male protagonist in order to maintain the illusion that they have control and power over the object of the gaze, the female character.

For Mulvey, female audience members must position themselves within the masculine gaze in order to gain pleasure from film. She notes that this "trans-sex identification is "a *habit* that very easily becomes *second nature.*"[278] Within Freudian theory both boys and girls move through a masculine/phallic stage in their development which is associated with activeness. However, girls are encouraged to move towards femininity which "leads to increasing repression of 'the active' (the 'phallic phase' in Freud's terms)."[279] Hollywood films structured around an active gaze "allow a woman spectator to rediscover that lost aspect of her sexual identity."[280] Mulvey sees only a recourse to masculinity for the female viewer if she wishes to find pleasure through viewing the film. Mulvey's insistence on this cross-gender identification for women viewers has been met with criticism as it denies a female spectator any other recourse than through masculinity.

Clover's ideas surrounding the gaze and identification follow on from Mulvey's to a degree. Clover sees that the cross gender identification within the horror film works between male viewer and female character. Though the Final Girl does take up a masculine position within the narrative her body is still female. Also at certain points in the narrative she takes up a distinctly feminine position, those moments when she is frightened, running, screaming and trembling, but these moments do not sway the male spectator's identification with her. Clover's theory of the male viewer willingly aligning himself with a female in distress is an important argument against Mulvey's reading of film as being only available through a masculine gaze. As shown above, Halberstam points to the limitations of Clover's argument in that the gender binaries are still left intact and this impedes the revolutionary potential of Clover's views on cross-gender identification.

Clover's theory holds weight with some of the films of the original slasher era, particularly those that adhered strongly to the structure of the first slasher films. The remaining presence of the dominance of the female hero within horror film attests to the importance of this figure as an area of study. Of course there are exceptions to be found in the original slasher era and

[278] L. Mulvey, "Afterthoughts on 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema'" in *Visual and Other Pleasures* (Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 1989), 33.
[279] Ibid., 31.
[280] Ibid.

Just Before Dawn is one film from the time period that she examines that tests the foundations of Clover's theory. Connie does not conform with many of the traits that Clover deemed to be so important and crucial to the creation of the Final Girl. *Scream* relied on the well-known structure of the slasher film, the psycho killer, the group of teenagers and the Final Girl, to ultimately subvert many of the assumptions that the audience held about the genre. This film also led to the emergence of a new type of Surviving Woman who showed few traits of the Final Girl from which she has formed. What Clover's theory does not allow for is a space for feminine heroism, based on a different approach for survival and without the need to 'man' up in order to survive. The character of the Surviving Woman is still significant, she is still a driving force of the narrative and many films still focus on her fight for survival. The parameters in which this character operates have changed and she is now tied closer to the feminine, she is more active, she does not survive through sheer luck but her own force of will and her body in this fight is more significant than Clover acknowledged.

Chapter Three.

Blood, Pus, Viscera. Oh My!:

The Importance of the Abject in the Construction of the Surviving Woman

"Horror films cannot be constructed as completely repelling or completely appealing. Either outlook denies something essential to the form."

- Noel Carroll

Nightmares and the Horror Film

"Plug it up! Plug it up! Plug it up!"

- Carrie's schoolmates

Carrie (1976/2013)

No horror film is complete without some form of special effect. Since the original slasher era of the 1970s and 1980s special effects have become more realistic. Special effects can be a site for engagement with the genre on a deeper level by fans and some special effects creators "are treated as *auteurs* of a sort within horror fandom and in associated magazines."[281] This focus on the people who create the blood and guts of horror points to the central importance of special effects in horror films. These effects can be used sparingly, as they are in films that value suspense over gore, or they can take over every scene once the monster has burst forth. *Wrong Turn 2* (2007) for example opens with the spilling of intestines – there is no prelude to the gore. The special effects of a horror film can help to embody what usually remains hidden. The blood, viscera and excrement that appear so extravagantly on the screen since the original slasher era are what the audience turn away from, what they 'wash away' in order to keep ourselves clean. The horror film works as a conduit that allows safe contact by the audience with all of these unpleasant aspects in life. It also allows contact with death. The horror film screen is littered with corpse. According to Julia Kristeva, in *Powers of Horror* (1982), "corpses show me what I permanently thrust aside in order to live." If the other signifiers of the abject, like blood, are abject because they belong on the inside and are to be instantly hidden and cleansed away, the corpse is the one aspect of the abject the subject

[281] M. Hiils. *The Pleasure of Horror* (London: Continuum, 2005), 88.

cannot distance themselves from.[282] When death comes for us the only thing we have left to expel is our life. The corpse is, in Krisetva's words, "death infecting life"[283] or as Creed states, "death is not something that exists apart from life, inhabiting a separate space of its own; death is an integral part of life."[284] Horror films thrive on a relationship with the abject. The abject has in fact given horror some of its ultimate monsters such as vampires, zombies, ghouls and witches.[285] The abject works within horror in three ways, according to Creed. Firstly, as an image, predominantly as a corpse but "followed by an array of bodily wastes such as blood, vomit, saliva, sweat, tears, and putrefying flesh."[286] Secondly, the abject is present in the concept of boundaries that are central to the conception of the monster, and monstrous, in horror films.[287] The third way is in the construction of the maternal feminine as abject.[288] The first two ways in which the abject functions in the horror film will be the focus of this chapter.

The abject is steeped in Freudian taboo. In *Totem and Taboo*, Freud writes that "the meaning of 'taboo'…diverges in two contrary directions. To us it means, on the one hand, 'sacred', 'consecrated', and on the other 'uncanny', 'dangerous', 'forbidden', 'unclean'", and the term is generally attached to things that are prohibited or restricted.[289] From this description it is easy to see the origins of the abject as a notion and how the abject might unsettle the subject and create feelings of danger. Abjection is caused by "what disturbs identity, system, order," taboos were a primitive way of protecting certain people, of protecting the stability of a society from the threat of disintegration.[290] The abject signals danger because it threatens the sense of self, of what makes us human, "the abject confronts us…with those fragile states where man strays on the territories of animal."[291] The abject threatens the symbolic order and shows its potential to be undermined, to be breakable. The danger of taboo, like horror, "lies in transitional states, simply because transition is neither one state nor the next, it is

[282] J. Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay in Abjection*, trans. L. S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia UP, 1982), 3.
[283] Ibid., 4.
[284] B. Creed, *Phallic Panic* (Victoria: Melbourne UP, 2005), 21.
[285] B. Creed, *The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis*. (New York: Routledge, 1993), 10.
[286] Ibid., 10.
[287] Ibid., 10-11.
[288] Ibid., 11.
[289] S. Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, trans. J. Strachey (New York: W. W. Norton & Co, 1950), 24.
[290] J. Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay in Abjection*, trans. L. S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia UP, 1982), 3.
[291] Ibid., 12

undefinable."[292] "We may call it a border; abjection is above all ambiguity,"[293] the in-between state of pregnant women and of menstruation are all representations of the abject because they defy category. These states of being highlight the penetrable nature of the human body, its instability and they are a threat to the symbolic order. The abject is more closely associated with women than with men. Many of the states of being, and the prohibitions associated with them, were centred on menstruation or pregnancy, states that only women themselves experience. Women's bodily functions were considered to be more harmful to society than those of men.

Horror film is steeped in images that are considered abject: death, pregnancy, menstruation and cannibalism all feature heavily as central subjects of the horror film. As the process of abjection is "associated with deformed bodies and oozing bodily fluids: blood, pus, bile, faeces, sweat and vomit breakdown the borders separating the inside from outside, the contained from the released,"[294] these bodily fluids are emphasised in the scenes of horror on screen. The visible presence of what should not be seen shows that the prohibitions and restrictions that society adheres to can collapse and, within the narrative of the film, in fact have collapsed.

The horror film exploits taboos and cultural prohibitions as a source for much of what is depicted as horrific. Certain religious and cultural taboos are associated with food, so not only is abjection tied to that which is expelled from the body but also what goes into it.[295] The horror film's fixation on cannibalism is an obvious food taboo. Cannibalism is a sign of complete degradation of what it means to be human, the mind and body reduced to nothing more than meat. *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* literally is about turning people into "products to be sold and consumed"[296] and many other horror films deal with humans being consumed as food. Within *The Cellar Door* (2007) the harmless looking psychopath Herman bites into one of his female victims, and the film delights in showing his teeth biting through her flesh and the blood dripping down his chin. Cannibalism, the desire to consume people as food, is still one of the common themes of horror. Taboos influence what is declared as horrific in any given society, those that blur or destroy the boundaries of the self are, generally,

[292] M. Douglas, *Purity and Danger* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 119.
[293] J. Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay in Abjection*, trans. L. S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia UP, 1982), 9.
[294] J. D. Edwards and R. Grauland, *Grotesque* (New York: Routledge 2013), 33.
[295] B. Cherry, *Horror* (London: Routledge, 2009), 117.
[296] K. Phillips, *Projected Fears: Horror Films and American Culture* (Connecticut: Praeger Publishers, 2005), 114

considered the most horrific of all. The horror film's ability to convey this physical disintegration of the self is intertwined with advances in special effects.

As horror films have evolved their ability to depict the ripping of bodies and the splattering of organs more realistically has been refined. Special effects have developed to a new level of realism and have allowed horror films to create physical reactions in their audiences. While the suspense genre can create physical feelings of tenseness, of literally sitting on the edge of the seat through "suggestion, the use of lighting, sound effects and music,"[297] the more graphic branches of horror film, such as the slasher, aim to trigger disgust. The sure way of doing this is through drenching the screen in images of abjection. Cherry explains: "Special effects in contemporary horror cinema are designed to open up the body,"[298] and the body becomes a display; the inner workings and the weakness of the body are foregrounded in horror. The advancement of special effects can depict, more realistically, the destruction of the body and in turn enhance its impact on the audience. Changes in genre have made the changes in special effects, and the ability to depict the body in various stages of destruction, the centre piece of their narrative.

The recent development of the torture porn genre is the best example of changes in special effects and how this impacts the audience. *Saw* (2004) is the film that heralded the beginning of this genre; it featured extremely graphic depictions of the body in various states of destruction. As Pinedo writes, this genre "dwells on details of incisions in spectacular detail. It utilizes special effects technology to deliver verisimilitude and a sense of immediacy."[299] Davidson states that, "where in many horror movies violence is trashy and fantastical, in torture porn it aims to be as graphic as possible, with cameras fixed steadily on the victim."[300] Realism is the key to the depictions of violence within this genre. Realism, the graphic and brutal depiction of bodies in pain and a sense of hopelessness characterise this genre. The depiction of the body in pain and in various stages of destruction is one of the driving forces within this genre. The torture porn genre has once again raised questions about ingrained misogyny and the extreme violence of the horror genre. Arguments that were once about the slasher film are being repeated about the torture porn genre, for example, that the depravity of

[297] B. Cherry, *Horror* (London: Routledge, 2009), 80.
[298] Ibid., 82.
[299] C. Pinedo. "Torture Porn: 21st Century Horror" in *A Companion to the Horror Film,* ed. H. M. Benshoff (West Sussex: John Wiley & Son, 2014), 343
[300] R. Davidson, "You are Sick! This is Not Art!" *Overland,* 125 (Summer 2011), 42.

the genre is damaging to youth, there is no artistic worth or merit in the production of these films and watching them too much will create psychopaths and murderers. Horror creates "a sense that there is something profoundly wrong with the world"[301] and speaks to fears about how the world is not quite as secure as we would hope. It does this by dealing in our irrational fears and nightmares, rather than the statistical reality of danger. Stephen King posits that it is the imaginative person who is attracted to the horror film: "[t]he imaginative person has a clearer fix on the fact of his/her fragility; the imaginative person realizes that *anything* can go disastrously wrong, at *any time*."[302] The clearer the screen can depict this fact the more appealing it is to the audience. It aims to 'drench' its audience with "proof" that the body can be taken apart, torture porn shows that there are people in the world willing, eager even, to do so. Advances in special effects now leave little to the viewer's imagination, unrelentingly depicting the assaults on the body.

The corporeal nature of horror is an important aspect of the horror film, particularly the slasher which highlights special effects and gory scenes as part of its appeal. Clover's analysis of the Final Girl and the slasher film makes no mention of the abject; it is not an important aspect of the appeal, nor of the viewing experience for her. Even though the killer is an agent of abject, he is the one who enacts the rending of flesh and the creation of corpses; this is just part of horror for Clover. Clover does not state the significance of the abject explicitly. However its significance needs to be stated. McRoy has written: "[i]t is often not…the film's plot points that remain in the viewer's memory, but the most extreme sequences of corporeal disintegration – the intestines spilling from a gaping abdominal wound, the crimson arterial spray jetting from a slit throat."[303] This is what most viewers are imprinted with as they leave the theatre or turn off the DVD. Horror, in all its forms, has a fixation on the body: a body in trouble, destroyed or in danger of destruction is the main source of the impact the film can make on the viewer. The body as a whole, unable to be pulled apart or made unintelligible is shown in the horror film to be a lie. Bodies are torn, cut, chopped and dismantled over and over again in horror. Horror dismisses the inside/outside barrier, it treats it as what it is. "Skin is always involved in abjection; it is the border zone

[301] Ibid.
[302] S. King, *Danse Macabre*, 2nd ed. (New York: Gallery Books, 2010), xii.
[303] J. McRoy, "'Parts is Parts': Pornography, Spatter Films and the Politics of Corporeal Disintegration" in *Horror Zone: The Cultural Experience of Contemporary Horror Film*, ed. I. Conrich (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2010), 197.

upon which self and not-self is perpetually played out,"[304] skin is a permeable membrane, one that is easily broken by knives, chainsaws, pitchforks and hands. The body in horror is a drastic meeting with the abject and the shouting, flinching, and looking away of its audience is a sign of its success as a film. The more the audience is disturbed by the depictions of the body in distress on screen the more a film can be assured of its success as a "good" horror film. Creed writes: "the modern horror film often "plays" with its audience, saturating it with scenes of blood and gore."[305] Although horror audiences have the option of turning away from the scenes of destruction on screen, horror films also work by affecting their audience by putting "an emphasis on visceral images and sounds that invade the body of the viewer and encourage changes from one body state to another,"[306] through the images on screen and the sounds of the horror film; the audible aspects of the tearing of bodies, the sounds of the destructive aspect of the abject can cause physical reactions in the viewer. The horror film expresses itself to the audience through physical reactions, foregrounding the body as a site of horror. The abject is not only relevant for horror's impact on the audience but for the way it operates in the narrative as well. In addition it brings into play how this works in conjunction with developments with the Surviving Woman.

The abject in Kristeva's *Powers of Horror* is what "beseeches, worries, and fascinates desire, which nonetheless, does not let itself be seduced. Apprehensive, desire turns aside; sickened, it rejects."[307] The abject is both appealing and repulsive and in most instances repulsion wins out. The abject threatens the sense of self, it has the threat of obliteration attached to it. Abjection is "what disturbs identity, system, order,"[308] and this is what horror capitalises on. The abject points to the fragility of the body and of the law, which ultimately points to the fragility of society, as a whole. Horror films utilise all these different aspects of the abject to construct the narrative and these aspects will be examined closely throughout this chapter. The abject provides horror with credible physical representations. Horror films are littered with dismembered bodies, they feature blood dripping from the walls, there are skeletons strewn about and death is depicted in as gory, complete way as is possible. Horror is all about undoing the myth of the impenetrable body and the upholding of the law, foregrounding the

[304] I. Tyler, "Skin-Tight: Celebrity, Pregnancy and Subjectivity" in *Thinking Through The Skin,* eds., S. Ahmed & J. Stacy (London: Routledge, 2001), 77
[305] B. Creed, *The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis*. (New York: Routledge, 1993), 13.
[306] T. Rizzo. *Deleuze and Film: A Feminist Introduction*. (London: Continuum, 2012), 106.
[307] J. Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay in Abjection*, trans. L. S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia UP, 1982), 1.
[308] Ibid., 4.

weakness of society. The abject is all about the "violation of boundaries,"[309] in every sense of the word and the horror film is the exploration, the safe of exploration, of this violation. Horror's main aim is to confront the viewer and to force them to recognise that what they believe is a lie and that bodies can be broken and torn. For example, in *The Descent* bodies are treated as nothing but food and the film depicts both the sight and sound of bodies being consumed. Another example can be found in *The Woman* when the wild woman confronts the man who has kept her chained up and he watches her eat his heart. Ian Conrich states that "horror shares with pornography a fragmentation of the body and, importantly, a marked impact on its audience on corporeal extremes."[310] Once again the connection between pornography and horror has been made. This is because these are two genres that are all about the body, they foreground the importance of the body. We are creatures who live inside our bodies, our bodies are how we feel the world and this means that they are important and, as horror highlights, that they can be harmed.

Audience members viewing a horror film can witness the spilling of blood and bodies being destroyed, they can face the abject and then safely leave the cinema. This means it can be shut away once again and this is the appeal of horror. Creed sees horror cinema "as a form of modern defilement rite, the horror film works to separate out the symbolic order from all that threatens its stability"[311] and goes on to note that "horror brings about a confrontation with the abject …in order, finally, to eject the abject and redraw the boundaries between the human and the nonhuman."[312] This confrontation works because there is no actual danger but curiosity about abject has been satisfied and this keeps the threat of the abject to a minimum. Kilker asserts: "The abject is horrifying because it is something that disgusts us, yet comes *from* us or from which we come,"[313] the horror film makes it particularly clear to the viewer that the pile of intestines they are seeing could be the intestines of an actual person. The inside and outside of a human body often appears in the same shot, or the viewer watches as the killer tears the human body apart. It is the horror films' ability to represent death that makes it appealing to audiences. As Creed writes, "modern audiences want to encounter

[309] B. Creed, "Death, Pleasure and Gender in Film," *Artlink*, 14, no. 4 (1994), 59.
[310] I. Conrich, "Introduction," in *Horror Zone: The Cultural Experience of Contemporary Horror Film*, ed. I. Conrich (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2010), 7.
[311] B. Creed, *The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis*. (New York: Routledge, 1993), 46.
[312] Ibid., 46.
[313] R. Kilker, "All Roads Lead to the Abject: The Monstrous Feminine and Gender Boundaries," *Literature Film Quarterly*, 34, no. 1 (2006), 58.

death, to see what death might look like, to feel their skin shiver, stomach tighten, adrenalin pump, heart pound,"[314] the filmic encounter with death allows people to feel more alive. Death is a part of human life that nobody can know, or experience before it happens to them, however, people still need to try to understand it and this can be achieved through ways "such as watching and following the death of others, as well as with the help of fiction, imagining how it will feel."[315] Horror cinema can be seen as a corpse, the border from which we in the modern era extricate ourselves "as being alive."[316]

The slasher film, like torture porn, is a particular site of the abject, as Clover describes it: "drenched in taboo and encroaching vigorously on the pornographic, the slasher film lies by and large beyond the purview of the respectable (middle-aged, middle-class) audience."[317] The connection to pornography is made through the lack of traditional aesthetic styling and how this allows the slasher film to show transparently the "(sub)cultural attitudes towards sex and gender."[318] Both pornography and the slasher film can be seen as unmediated looks into the attitudes of a society. The killers of these films often are depicted as "murderous, incestuous, cannibalistic,"[319] even in films, like *Scream* (1996) that feature seemingly average people in the role of killer. Their acts place them in the same position as the obvious, disfigured killers of the original slasher era though they are more sinister because they highlight another aspect of the abject that the original slasher killers did not. The killers of the *Scream* series highlight the fragility of the law. As Kristeva states, crime is abject but crime that is premeditated and cunning is more so and abjection is related to "a friend who stabs you."[320] As discussed in the first chapter, killers are more likely to be represented as average human beings, and this highlights an aspect of the abject that was previously absent from traditional slasher films. That is the function of the law in the creation of maintaining society, one connected to a rise in the acknowledgment that a killer could be anyone. In *Scream* the killers often are someone close to Sidney and her friends, one of the group. This aspect makes their acts more abject in the sense that they highlight not only the body's fragility, but also the fragility of the law. Also as horror films have progressed in the recent decades any

[314] B. Creed, "Death, Pleasure and Gender in Film," *Artlink*, 14, no. 4 (1994), 59.
[315] O. Hakola. *Rhetoric of Death in American Living Dead Films* (Bristol: Intellect, 2015), 21.
[316] J. Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay in Abjection*, trans. L. S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia UP, 1982), 3.
[317] C.J. Clover. *Men, Women and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film.* (New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1993), 66.
[318] Ibid. 22.
[319] Ibid., 30.
[320] J. Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay in Abjection*, trans. L. S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia UP, 1982), 4.

trace of humour has been replaced by a dark seriousness. As Vivian Sobchak writes, they "refuse to wink at themselves and instead take their horrors seriously."[321] *Scream* and sequels are obviously an exception to this. The original slasher film era featured many plot points that could be conceived as humorous or just so ludicrous that one could not but laugh. However as films have developed they have become darker, foregrounding the danger of the abject, highlighting the seriousness of bodily disintegration. These films consider "the fragility not only of human flesh but also of human community."[322]

Importantly, the abject is also never fully repelled, it can be pushed aside but it always beckons. It lurks on the borders of the clean and proper, "from its place of banishment, the abject does not cease challenging its master."[323] In traditional slashers this aspect of the abject was signalled by the killer himself. The durable killer who, even after facing mortal wounds, would spring back into action for a sequel or two was this permanent threat, the creature lurking on the borders of the proper society always threatening a return. In recent horror this threat is held within the Surviving Woman's knowledge; though she puts an end to the original threat she lives on with the knowledge that society is not beyond destruction and that, in reality, not much stands in the way of its total destruction.

Though recent horror tends to shift away from the indestructible killer, the threat the abject poses, even as the credits run, is still within the film. The Surviving Woman has witnessed the destructive aspect of the abject, she has the remnants of it on her clothes and skin, she has witnessed the permeability of the human body and she has survived. The strength that can be found within the abject will be examined in the next chapter by exploring the surviving women who inhabit the world of hybrid action/horror films. This survival however does not mean that the woman is unaffected by the abject. "Although the subject must exclude the abject, it must, nevertheless, be tolerated, for that which threatens to destroy life also helps to define life,"[324] the Surviving Woman is aware of her own mortality and that of those around her.

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[321] V. Sobchak, "Peek-a-boo!: Thoughts on seeing (most of) The Descent and Isolation," *Film Comment*, 42, no. 4 (2006), 40.
[322] Ibid.
[323] J. Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay in Abjection*, trans. L. S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia UP, 1982), 2.
[324] B. Creed, *The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis*. (New York: Routledge, 1993), 9.

This relationship between the Surviving Woman and the abject has changed significantly. Clover's Final Girl encountered the bodies of her friends, she may have during her flight witnessed the destruction that the killer wrought on society, but physically she is untouched by this. When characters were touched by the abject they were unable to cope with it. Thus in *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974) Sally emerges from the house that she has been trapped in, covered in blood, having witnessed all manner of hideous sights, and when she eventually finds a way out of this nightmare with the help of some passers-by she collapses in a state of catatonic shock. For Clover, Sally is the beginning of what became the Final Girl. Her ordeal is much more visceral than those that follow in the 1980s and she suffers more than most of the Final Girls that Clover looks at. She is unable to cope with this and regresses into her mind. Sally is the beginning of what becomes the masculinised Final Girl; her alignment with the masculine is why she fails to cope with this aspect of her survival. Her link to masculinity links her with the symbolic, which in Kristevan theory is the realm of law, language and the father. The horror film does not operate within the realm of the symbolic, but rather the semiotic. The semiotic is before language and law, it is a place of drives, instincts, beats, rhythms and sounds.[325] The masculine Final Girl can be described as choosing to take up the Law of the Father and place herself in a masculine position. Within this position the subject, the woman who has decided to take up the masculine position accepts the "concomitant privileging of masculine identity."[326] When the Final Girl does this, as she does in the films Clover analyses, she moves away from the feminine and away from her connection with the abject. Sally is unable to cope with all she has witnessed because over the course of her film journey she has rejected the semiotic and taken steps towards the symbolic through her masculinisation. She cannot cope with the intrusion of the abject into her world because of her alignment with the masculine. In contrast, Connie from *Just Before Dawn* copes with her drenching in the abject better because of her closer alignment to the feminine.

Just Before Dawn is a very under-analysed example of horror from the 1980s and as such very little has been written on it. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Connie becomes more feminised during her final fight with her attacker. Connie aligns with some of Clover's requirements for her masculinised Final Girl, she is watchful. At the beginning of the film moreover she is dressed quite demurely, when the fight comes to its climax she is more

[325] K. Oliver, "Introduction," in *The Portable Kristeva*, ed. K. Oliver (New York: Columbia UP, 2002), xvi-xvii.
[326] K. Campbell. *Jacques Lacan and Feminist Epistemology* (London: Routledge, 2004), 91.

aligned with the feminine. Earlier in the film, when two of the group play a prank on the rest, Megan arms herself and this results in Connie feeling weak. Megan is an extroverted and risk taking character, traits the film implies Connie wishes she had herself. Connie emulates Megan by dressing like her and through this act she gains strength. When she kills the last of the twins, as Kim Newman describes it, she "overcomes a three hundred-pound psycho by reaching into his mouth and grabbing his tonsils until he chokes."[327] She removes her hand which is drenched in blood, saliva and other body fluids but she is not broken by this. Also her method of dispatching the killer does not involve her taking up the phallic weapon of her killer and unmanning him as she 'mans' herself. Connie not only becomes covered in the abject during her final fight, but she also retains her connection to the feminine by not claiming the killer's weapon as her own.[328]

Traditionally it is thought that an encounter with the abject leads to a loss of self, an obliteration of what constitutes being human, as shown in my analysis above of the closing scene of *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*. With the exception of *Just Before Dawn,* in original slasher films an encounter with the abject leads to the mental destruction of the survivor, as seen through Sally and *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*. The piercing of the body, the breaking of a law, the inability to contain the monstrous are all aspects that the horror film explores. The closing scene of horror is often the expulsion of the abject: the monstrous is destroyed and normal society can resume. A positive reading of the abject can be established through the relationship the abject has with the Surviving Woman in recent horror.

This has continued on into recent horror with the surviving women very often becoming drenched in the abject. The significance of this is not just for the shock to the audience, as it usually occurs during an extreme moment, but also impacts the Surviving Woman. She emerges stronger, unlike Sally, and more ready to take the fight to her attacker than before. *The Descent*, a film about six friends and a caving expedition that goes horribly wrong when they are set upon by what can only be described as bat people, features a scene that highlights the significance of the abject, particularly as it is represented through blood. When the Surviving Woman, Sarah, is first attacked by the bat people she falls into a pool of blood. When she pulls herself up onto a rock, she arms herself, and this is the moment when she

[327] K. Newman, *Nightmare Movies: Horror on the Screen since the 1960s* (London, Bloomsbury, 2011), 82.
[328] C.J. Clover. *Men, Women and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film.* (New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1993), 49.

prepares to fight. It is after this that she first takes action and kills two of the bat people. Recent surviving women embrace the abject as a way to survive. Pools of blood make for good hiding places.

The Surviving Woman's actions, as opposed to the actions of the Final Girl, pull her closer to the abject. There has been a trend in recent decades of forcing the Surviving Woman to kill innocent people. In the 2003 remake of the *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* the Surviving Woman, Erin, is forced to kill one of her friends. Erin finds her friend alive held on a hook waiting for Leatherface to return. She tries to help him but it is all in vain as he has suffered too much already, and he begs her to end his suffering and she does so. *The Descent* features a similar scene in which she must end the suffering of one of her friends because she has suffered a severe wound and does not wish to be finished off by the creatures. These are not the actions Clover's Final Girl had to encounter. By the time the Final Girl encountered her friends they were already dead, mutilated corpses were all that was left. In fact the Surviving Woman actually has to participate in the killing. Though she does this reluctantly it does not alter the fact that she commits murder and she is responsible for the destruction of a body. The Final Girl is often responsible for the death, or temporary death, of the killer. This happens in a flurry of fleeing and struggling against the killer where she does not have time to linger on the effect of her actions, she never has to kill a friend or an innocent. The Final Girl's participation in the death of another is only in the last moments of her "ten to twenty minutes"[329] on screen. The Surviving Woman who must kill her friend lives with that for the majority of the film time.

The Surviving Woman does not participate in premeditated murder in the above examples. Read through the abject, premeditated crime heightens the illustration of the fragility of society.[330] Premeditated murder does feature as part of the narrative of the Surviving Woman in one instance. However in *Hostel Part 2* (2007) the Surviving Woman, Beth, commits premeditated murder. The *Hostel* series (2005-2011) focuses on a unique business that auctions off tourists for murder. The first two films in the series take place in Slovakia. The second film in the series focuses on a group of three women who take a holiday to Slovakia, and features a woman who must buy her way out of danger. This involves paying to kill the

[329] C.J. Clover. *Men, Women and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film.* (New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1993), 36.
[330] J. Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay in Abjection*, trans. L. S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia UP, 1982), 4.

man that was going to kill her as it is the only way she is allowed to live, but in an interesting twist the film also depicts her killing the woman who lured them to Slovakia, the woman who is ultimately responsible for the deaths of her friends. Although the film does not explicitly tell the audience that Beth has paid for her revenge, the rules of the auction are laid out for the audience and indicate that she would have had to have done so. This aspect of Beth does not detract from her role as Surviving Woman as it is motivated by anger and loss. These emotions in the construction of the Surviving Woman will be explored further in chapter four. This shows a marked separation from the Final Girl who is forced to kill in order to survive, for the Surviving Woman justice is not served until all of those responsible are dead. In traditional slasher films there is a perceived imbalance between the deaths of male characters and female characters. Clover sees the difference being one of timing and opportunity for the killer and female characters are hunted, whereas male characters are often just collateral damage during the killer's hunt for female victims.[331] Male characters die because they have sex, or do drugs, or just happen to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. Female characters die "because they are female."[332] Clover sees that more time is spent on the deaths of female characters, that the death of a woman is lingered on, whereas male characters' deaths are quick and they are given "no time to react or register terror."[333] This has now shifted and horror films trade in death, and the sex of the person being killed does not matter so much as how this death can be depicted. The film *P2* (2007), about a woman, Angela, trapped in a parking garage with her stalker, Thomas, on Christmas Eve, features a scene where a man is slowly crushed to death by a car. Angela is trapped in the passenger seat of this car fully able to see the horror of this event. This is not unusual in horror film as women often witness the full horror of the events of the film. As Clover writes, "she is the one who encounters the mutilated bodies,"[334] and as mentioned earlier, this is the Final Girl's brief point of contact with the abject. However, Clover's Final Girl does not suffer the image as long as the Surviving Woman does, as the scene described above exemplifies. However, what is particularly unusual, and alters Clover's theory, is that the man who is being crushed is also fully cognizant of what is happening to him. This is just one of many examples showing a shift, as male bodies are no longer held as sacred or treated differently from female victims.

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[331] C.J. Clover. *Men, Women and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film.* (New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1993), 81.
[332] Ibid.
[333] Ibid., 82.
[334] Ibid., 35.

The abject is also present through the general absence of law within the narrative of the film. Repeatedly authority figures are shown to be unable to help because they either cannot understand what is going on or they end up dead, or they are part of the horror. This latter aspect is the most significant in recent years. The remake of *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (2003) features the head of the Hewitt household posing as a sheriff; in the remake of *I Spit on your Grave* (2010) one of Jennifer's rapists is the local sheriff, so there is a pattern of the law being beyond thrust in the realm of contemporary horror. In most horror it is the bodily aspect of the abject that is the most significant, but it can also apply to treason and lying. As mentioned earlier, this aspect of the abject operates within the *Scream* series but also features heavily in the construction of the abject in the *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* and *I Spit on Your Grave* remakes. "Abjection…is immoral, sinister, scheming, and shady: a terror that dissembles, a hatred that smiles, a passion that uses the body for barter instead of inflaming it, a debtor who sells you up, a friend who stabs you."[335] In the remakes of *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* and *I Spit on Your Grave* this aspect of the abject is highlighted. The abject hidden behind a trusted uniform and the horror of the betrayal when safety was thought to have been found, is one aspect of these films that is representative of changes in recent horror. In the traditional slasher film authority figures were at best killed off trying to help and at worst completely ignorant of the actual danger but were never part of the villainy. The hidden abject, this non-visual, behavioural aspect of the abject, has become something of a theme in recent horror appearing as more marked than in traditional slasher films.

In *Silent Hill: Revelations* (2012), the deceptive, manipulative, betraying aspect of the abject is highlighted through the depiction of light and dark and the twist on the traditional opposition of the two. The supposed saviour of the town is really a nightmare creature. She makes speeches about how she is trying to protect the town, how she is the right and the dark creatures are the wrong, however, underneath her white robes and speeches lies a monster; a monster who is defeated by one of the dark creatures. Light in this film represents danger. The villain of this film appears enshrined in light, but this hidden evil is revealed by the hero, Sharon. The villain appears in the film cloaked in white and light, created by her pale skin, hair and costume, and this façade is destroyed during her confrontation with Sharon, when she is revealed to be a grotesque, bladed monster. The darkness in this film may be where the

[335] J. Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay in Abjection*, trans. L. S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia UP, 1982), 4.

creatures who are attracted to the light reside but this is, ultimately, shown to be the truer side. Though monsters reign supreme in the darkness there is nothing hidden about them, they have their true selves on display.

In *The Woman* (2011), the introduction of the woman into the family's home reveals what has been hidden. The father, it turns out, is a controlling, domineering man who abuses his wife, eldest daughter and the woman whom he captures. His son is following in his father's footsteps and the mother, if not completely a willing participant in her husband's acts, is complicit enough to have endangered her daughters. Her daughters, one pregnant to her father, the other too young to really comprehend what is going on, are the only worthy members of the family. The film reveals that even though the woman is wild, untamed, uncivilised and without a place in society she is the only one with any power to save the girls. This film again reveals the abject that resides within the clean and proper. The woman, who kills mother, father and son, ultimately saves the two daughters from their civilised existence and offers them an opportunity to live like her but without fear of what goes on in clean and proper families behind closed doors. Where once the abject in horror was the visible monstrosity of the deformed killer and the destruction his actions cause, the abject now resides also in betrayal and lies on screen. The feminist aspect of this film will be explored in chapter four through an examination of the relationship between the woman and the sisters.

Significantly, although the abject is represented more frequently in contemporary horror as behavioural it still functions predominantly through the body. What the abject ultimately does is foreground the importance of the body. In the horror genre bodies are always in danger. The danger to society that horror also highlights is secondary to the immediate danger that the body is placed in. Sharrett asserts that "[t]he body is the special locus of horror, always a site of mutilation and the excretory,"[336] and the function of bodies within the horror film is to highlight the danger of being made unintelligible, unreadable as human, by the actions of the killer. Bodies are in danger of becoming meat, the slow butchering of human bodies to nothing more than chunks of flesh is lingered on in *Staunton Hill* (2009) as well as the *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* series. Corpses, both fresh and decaying, appear in the final scenes of many horror films. The brutal dismemberment of these corpses has become more significant

[336] C. Sharrett, "The Horror Film in Neoconservative Culture" in *The Dread Of Difference*, ed. B. K. Grant (Austin: Texas UP, 1996), 263.

to the depiction of the corpse in horror heightening the feelings that the abject creates in the viewer.

As mentioned earlier, women are more closely linked with the abject than men. In Freud's exploration of the taboo he found that a lot of primitive cultures had rules regarding the contact with women at certain moments in their life, such as menstruation and pregnancy because the "woman's body is unstable; it changes shape in pregnancy and it exudes bodily fluids such as milk during lactation and blood during menstruation."[337] The link between women and the abject emerges because women are seen to have a more unstable mode of being and bodies do not adhere to the clean and proper self. "Unlike the idealised male body, the female body is not taut, discrete and classical;"[338] woman's body are not considered to be as contained, as certain. "Woman's boundaries are more permeable, fluid."[339] This openness is a sign of danger and threat, and it belies society's conviction of the wholeness of the human body. Elizabeth Grosz writes that female bodies are perceived to be "somehow *more* biological, *more* corporeal, and *more* natural than men."[340] This is shown as a weakness because, as the horror film demonstrates, bodies can be torn. Women are also connected to the abject through representing excess and monstrousness. Generally, in horror this aspect of women's bodies and their connection to the abject are represented through the female monster.

"All human societies have a conception of the monstrous-feminine of what it is about woman that is shocking, terrifying, horrific, abject,"[341] as the source of life, woman generates fear. Creed posits this fear in the figure of the archaic mother, "the parthenogenetic mother, the mother as primordial abyss, the point of origin and of end."[342] As applied to film this figure can be found in the figure of the alien queen seen in *Aliens* (1986). This figure generates fear because she procreates without the need for another, she is self-generating and as such speaks to male fears about becoming obsolete, being devoured and, ultimately, being reincorporated. It also speaks to male fears about whether or not woman is actually castrated or castrating. Female monsters are marked by excess and a fear of the power that the female body holds,

[337] B. Creed, *Phallic Panic* (Victoria: Melbourne UP, 2005), 15.
[338] Ibid., 22.
[339] Ibid., 151.
[340] E. Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Towards a Corporeal Feminism* (St. Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1994), 14.
[341] B. Creed, *The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis*. (New York: Routledge, 1993), 1.
[342] Ibid., 17.

especially the reproductive aspects. Creed finds the origins for this figure in myth, however as she writes "what is most interesting about the mythological figure of woman as the source of all life is that, within patriarchal signifying practices, particularly the horror film, she is reconstructed and re-presented as a *negative* figure."[343] This negative aspect emerges out of male fears and has little to do with "female desire or feminine subjectivity."[344] In *Aliens* the "Mother Alien is primarily a terrifying figure not because she is castrated but because she castrates." Creed asserts that the figure of the alien offspring displays the mission of the alien queen, "the creature whose deadly mission is represented as the same as that of the archaic mother-to tear apart and reincorporate all life."[345] Creed goes on: "Women constitute monstrous deviations from the moral/male norm,"[346] the woman is susceptible to the process of monstrosity. The female monster is inevitably destroyed at the close of the film, shown as lacking control; she is excessive and violent. Creed's examination of the monstrous woman does, however, create a link within the horror film between women and the abject.

A critical film in the link between women and abjection is *Carrie* (1976, remade 2013). In a reading of this film, Creed describes the character of Carrie as a modern depiction of the witch and writes that "witches are accused, among other things, of copulating with the devil, causing male impotence, causing the penis to disappear and of stealing men's penises."[347] Witches are portrayed as the ultimate threat to manhood and as such they are put to death. *Carrie* is the tale of a teenage girl who has been raised by a deeply religious mother, and about what happens to her after she starts her first period. Clover reads Carrie as an incarnation of what eventually becomes the Final Girl. Her interpretation of Stephen King results in her claiming that "the boy so threatened and so humiliated…is a boy who recognizes himself in a girl who finds herself bleeding from her crotch in the gym shower, pelted with tampons, and sloshed with pig's blood at the senior prom."[348] Clover sees this as a sign that male viewers are prepared to identify with a girl in fear and in pain. How any film that begins with menstruation can be interpreted as a potential site of identification for male audiences is slightly puzzling. Regardless of this however in most readings of Carrie she is

[343] Ibid., 27.
[344] Ibid., 7.
[345] Ibid., 22.
[346] B. Creed, *Phallic Panic* (Victoria: Melbourne UP, 2005), x.
[347] B. Creed, *The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis*. (New York: Routledge, 1993), 75.
[348] C.J. Clover. *Men, Women and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film.* (New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1993), 5-6.

well-established as a monster. "Abjection is constructed as a rebellion of filthy, lustful, carnal, female flesh."[349] Women who lack control of their body, who allow their bodies to be penetrated by darkness, who take up too much space with their messy, bleeding bodies are deemed as monstrous. This is the standard reading of Carrie and her relationship to her body, but an alternative reading of *Carrie* will be presented in the following paragraphs. Along with Regan from *The Exorcist*, Carrie is monstrous because she does not contain her body and her body, in turn, threatens the world with destruction.

Women's bodies are constructed as monstrous through menstruation, for "menstrual blood is constructed as a source of abjection; its powers are so great it can transform woman into any one of a number of fearful creatures: possessed child, killer and vengeful witch."[350] Both Carrie and Regan's monstrosity coincide with the onset of their menstrual cycle. Indeed "[t]he power of menstruation" is a theme in both *Carrie* and *The Exorcist*.[351] The bleeding girl is constructed in *The Exorcist* as being "possessed not by the devil but by her own unsocialized body."[352] The menstruating body highlights the symbolic orders' debt to the mother and how "the symbolic order is a sham built on sexual repression and the sacrifice of the mother."[353] The menstruating body belies the representation of the female body as weak, as it shows that she holds the power for the continuation of man. "The maternal figure who reminds man of his debt to nature and of the inevitability of death,"[354] the menstruating girl, along with the monstrous womb of *The Brood* (1979), are reminders of the tie that man, for all his attempts to distance himself, retains with nature, the mother and the womb. The woman's body "reminds man of his mortality and of the fragility of the symbolic order,"[355] this is the threat that the sight of the bleeding girl signifies, that his life and reproduction resides in blood. The threat these bleeding girls hold is ended within the narrative of these films, as Carrie's power overwhelms her and Regan is exorcised of her demon. The female body, the unruly, threatening female body, is contained, the danger they present is thwarted and the symbolic order is once again safe.

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[349] B. Creed, *The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis*. (New York: Routledge, 1993), 38.
[350] Ibid., 83.
[351] J. Delaney, M. J. Lupton and E. Toth, *The Curse: A Cultural History of Menstruation* (Chicago: Illinois UP, 1988), 156.
[352] B. Creed, *The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis*. (New York: Routledge, 1993), 40.
[353] Ibid., 41.
[354] B. Creed, *Phallic Panic* (Victoria: Melbourne UP, 2005), 50.
[355] B. Creed, *The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis*. (New York: Routledge, 1993), 47.

An alternate reading of *Carrie,* particularly its remake which develops the relationship between Carrie and those around her, is of Carrie as a Surviving Woman. Carrie is the victim of mental, emotional and physical abuse from everyone around her, her mother, her schoolmates, people around the town. She has been marked different because of her mother's actions and her mother's own psychosis. Her first encounter with the abject, her menstrual blood, triggers her powers. Her final encounter with the abject, her drenching in pig's blood coupled with the video of her earlier torment by her schoolmates, as well as also being read as "a kind of parody replay" of the earlier shower scene, trigger her revenge.[356] She is not only getting justice for all the wrongs perpetrated on her but for her prom date, Tommy, who dies from a bucket to the head.

Clover's reading of the character Carrie as the beginning of the male-identified Final Girl misses the point. *Carrie* is a story all about blood. Carrie is told by her mother that she has become a woman after her first period, this for her mother signals the arrival of sin, but for Carrie it signals the arrival of power. After she has killed the culprits responsible for the pig's blood and the death of Tommy, she returns home, attempting at last to find some peace. Carrie does not survive because she resides in a world that is never going to allow her peace or happiness, she tries to wash the blood away but she is only met with more abuse at the hands of her mother. Exhausted she dies, unable to live in a world that keeps insisting on spilling her blood, literally and figuratively. Carrie can be seen as a Surviving Woman in that she saves an innocent life, Sue Snell. Sue Snell is the only popular girl to feel guilty about the shower incident and attempts to help Carrie. As her last act, Carrie, forces Sue out of the house, protecting Sue and her unborn baby. The concluding scene of the film, with Sue dreaming of Carrie rising from the grave again, maintains the traditional operation of the abject in that the abject can never fully be expelled from the world. Carrie inhabited a world without hope of justice, and she is unable ever to put the abject to rest even temporarily. However, she acts heroically by saving others and getting justice, leaving the world a better place. Where the Surviving Woman differs from the monstrous woman is that she does not die nor is she contained; there is a positive aspect to the abject and this is in how the abject gives strength to the Surviving Woman.

[356] J. Aisenberg, *Studies in Horror Film: Brian de Palma's Carrie* (Colorado: Centipede Press, 2011), 178.

The idea of the abject can be combined with Gilles Deleuze's theory of becoming.[357] Through the Deleuzian theory of becoming one can see how the abject works to disrupt borders and identities positively. Horror films often feature creatures that do not abide by binary oppositions. As Creed writes, the vampire is "male and female, human and animal, seductive and repulsive, civilised and repulsive."[358] The werewolf and the zombie are also creatures that inhabit this liminal space between states of being. They are animal/human or living/dead, they do not adhere to one subject position, often inhabiting many different aspects at once. "Metamorphosis is a persistent theme in myth, literature and the horror film, signifying a deep-seated anxiety over the definition of what it means to be male and human,"[359] each appearance of a monster which does not adhere to the boundaries of what is defined as male and human in culture is a sight of horror and a place where the abject, its threat to system and order, can be seen.

As I have previously asserted, the abject is a source of becoming for the Surviving Woman. Outside the usual meat of the horror film the abject serves a transformative role for the Surviving Woman. In *Deleuze and Film: A Feminist Introduction* Rizzo argues for a feminist interpretation of the slasher film.[360] Although she retains Clover's Final Girl term she examines the character through a Deleuzian 'becoming' framework, result in an expansion on what the Final Girl means and how she operates within the narrative. This approach goes a long way towards looking at the Final Girl concept through a lens of difference as opposed to either/or opposing fields. Gender binaries have been deconstructed by feminists and that gender itself is has been revealed to be a social construct that is "designed to perpetuate gender inequality."[361] If the gender binary is broken down and femininity is reconstructed without the negative connotations of weakness and softness, it opens the figure of the Surviving Woman to a reading that considers degrees of difference instead of opposition. Rizzo sees limitations in Clover's theory, such as Clover's fixation on gender, noting that "by focussing on the Final Girl's gender the body and sexuality are devalued."[362] Rizzo continues that stating "by insisting that they are gendered masculine, Clover privileges gender and the

[357] G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, trans. B. Massumi. (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013).
[358] B. Creed, *Phallic Panic* (Victoria: Melbourne UP, 2005), 68.
[359] Ibid., 137.
[360] T. Rizzo. *Deleuze and Film: A Feminist Introduction*. (London: Continuum, 2012)
[361] A. Fausto-Sterling. *Sexing the Body*: *Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 3.
[362] T. Rizzo. *Deleuze and Film: A Feminist Introduction*. (London: Continuum, 2012), 87.

mind over the sexed body."[363] This particular aspect of Clover is significant because even though a masculine girl ultimately overcomes the danger, the fact is that it is a female body that flees, fights and is hurt. Rizzo argues for a different interpretation of the Final Girl's survival, positing that it "resides not in her masculinity but in a form of affective perception that enables her to enter into a process of becoming."[364] This affective perception "operates through the breakdown of the external/internal, subject/object distinctions. In addition, the blurring of these distinctions is an essential element of transformation or becoming."[365] The Surviving Woman is able to perceive the world differently from those around her and to accept that all is not as it seems.

"The Final Girl exemplifies…that the body, identity and subjectivity are continually decomposing and recomposing with every encounter,"[366] the survivor of horror is an open body, one that is changeable and flexible. Rizzo's argument focuses on the body, she sees the Final Girl as qualitatively different due to her openness in contrast to their closed bodies. Her friends "fit neatly into fixed and rigid categories that offer far more limited possibilities."[367] The essence of Rizzo's evaluation of other characters in these narratives is that she sees them as stereotypes. They are firmly entrenched in a world that holds a strong "fear of losing oneself and one's boundaries is made more acute in a society which values boundaries over continuity and separateness over sameness."[368] They hold on to the rigid idea that the body is an impermeable whole, complete unto itself and has no need for change or development. The supporting cast of the horror film are minimally fleshed out characters who remain this way because they have "a very limited and mediated"[369] way of being in the world. The Surviving Woman is the only one not limited by these trappings and as such has an increased ability to survive and fight.

"The Final Girl embodies difference as duration not only because she is constantly becoming with the world, but also because her past experiences seem to permeate her present."[370] This can be seen in the *Scream* series. In the first *Scream* film, the actions of Billy and Stu, those

[363] Ibid., 89.
[364] Ibid., 90.
[365] Ibid., 95.
[366] Ibid., 90.
[367] Ibid., 94.
[368] B. Creed, *The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis*. (New York: Routledge, 1993), 29.
[369] T. Rizzo. *Deleuze and Film: A Feminist Introduction*. (London: Continuum, 2012), 94.
[370] Ibid., 96.

behind the ghost face mask, are tied to a past event that comes back to haunt the Surviving Woman, Sidney. This past event was the murder of Sidney's mother by Billy because his father and her mother were having an affair. Sidney is punished for this because she is her mother's daughter and therefore the actions of her mother are extended to her by the logic of the psychopathic Billy. *Scream 2* (1997) features Billy's mother as the ghost face killer, she has come back to get revenge on Sidney for the death of her little boy, even though Billy was a young adult at the time of his death, his mother still speaks of him as if he had been a little boy. So once again the events of the past infected and influence Sidney's present. *Scream 3* is the return of her mother's sins, for want of better word. The ghost face killer is Sidney's half-brother, jealous because his mother raised Sidney but gave him up. The *Scream* series also repeats past events in that each film after the first features a reference to the events of the past. This occurs through the use of the ghostface mask, through its use of traditional slasher conventions and also through retelling the previous film in the current film. The *Scream* series work as a movie within a movie. As we saw earlier, in *Scream* the events of the past are turned into a movie series called *Stab*, this reinforces the importance of the past on the present.

The events of the past and the subsequent strengths they provide the Surviving Woman, her insight, self-possession and general resourcefulness are seen by Rizzo not as the result of a masculine alignment "but of a sexuality that is open to change."[371] Becoming in a Deleuzian conceptualisation "refutes binary divisions and enables further transformations."[372] "The impact of the past has not only broadened her affective perception, but has also given her an awareness of her own ability to be affective in the world."[373] This is what separates her from the others around her, who have not been impacted by an earlier trauma. Unlike the Surviving Woman they have not had to endure violence prior to their encounter with the killer. Her past trauma has not left her weakened, or frozen in place, instead it allows her to being able to perceive the danger in her present.[374] This can also be extended out to explain the survival of Sarah in *The Descent.*

[371] Ibid., 97.
[372] A. Powell, *Deleuze and the Horror Film* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2005), 211.
[373] T. Rizzo. *Deleuze and Film: A Feminist Introduction*. (London: Continuum, 2012), 97.
[374] Ibid., 98.

Sarah has come face to face with death early on in the film when her husband and daughter are killed in a car accident. A year later the trauma is still felt, her awareness of the danger within the cave is related by her friends to her previous trauma, but her awareness of the danger can be read through her affective perception of the world. 'Affective perception' is best defined in horror film as the way in which the Surviving Woman is aware of the world around her: "she is in tune with the world and the events around her. Even before any of the killings occur, she appears hyper-observant and attentive in a way that her friends do not."[375] Her past permeating her presence is not a product of a former sufferer of post-traumatic stress disorder as her friends seem to think she is going through, but as proof that she knows that the world is dangerous. Although Clover's Final Girl is more aware of the danger stalking her than her friends, she is rarely impacted by a past trauma. This reflects another difference between the Final Girl and the Surviving Woman and how they are more open to becoming. While this affective perception is well served by the idea of a past trauma, I would argue that it is not just that they have suffered a trauma but that they have witnessed death, thereby they have come into contact with the abject. I argue that what allows the Surviving Woman to prosper where others fail is the fact she has been touched by the abject. Those without the past trauma now bathe in the abject.

Freud wrote that "[t]ouching is the first step towards obtaining any sort of control over, or attempting to make use of, a person or object."[376] The abject becomes embodied in the horror narrative through the presentation of blood and innards. When the Surviving Woman is drenched in the abject, as Sarah is in *The Descent*, such a moment symbolises a baptism of blood, a rebirth from the fleeing and scared woman to the aggressive and active Surviving Woman. Once she has touched what the killer has been creating, the disruption of society through the spilling of blood, then she has power over it. Another example is Chrissie in *Texas Chainsaw Massacre: the Beginning* (2006) when, while hiding from Leatherface, she immerses herself in a vat of blood in a slaughterhouse, armed and ready to attack.

The Surviving Woman also opens up her own body for her survival. In *Prometheus* (2012), Elizabeth, cuts open her body to remove the alien that has grown there. In *Antisocial* (2013) the Surviving Woman, Sam, drills into her own skull to remove the infection that is growing

[375] Ibid., 92.
[376] S. Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, trans. J. Strachey (New York: W. W. Norton & Co, 1950), 33-34

there so that she can live. In *Savaged* (2013), a woman tied to a bed by barbed wire, kept chained down by men who want to keep her, tears her arms and legs free, splitting her skin and spilling her own blood in order to give her a chance to live. This aspect of the Surviving Woman is a realisation of the idea that "women's boundaries are permeable,"[377] but this is not seen as a weakness, or as something that makes women less. In the horror film it is seen as a blessing. The fact that they are not tied into an idea of the body as a whole is what saves them. This also points to the Surviving Woman as being willing to do whatever it takes to survive in horrible circumstances. The Surviving Woman refuses to be contained, as Rudy tells Herman in *The Cellar Door*: "you can't take it when people won't do what you want them to do… you have to put them in little boxes, all nice and neat and clean."[378] This conversation happens moments before her escape and her confrontation with Herman. She, like the other Surviving Women, cannot be contained, not by definitions of what constitute the human, not by men with cages in their basement. The Surviving Woman is too fluid and fights against closed definitions of what she is meant to be. This is a sign of them as open, as not fixed and as adaptable, they must be open to the idea of pain in order to triumph.

By bathing both the audience and the Surviving Woman in images of the abject, horror films highlight a different way of reading these surviving women, not as masculine or monstrous, but as bodies in motion. "Grotesque bodies can…resist absorption into the objectifying gaze that seeks to contain them."[379] Applied to the horror film this explains why the Surviving Woman has diverged from recourse to the masculine in order to gain and then retain power. As Clover posits, the fear of the potential lack in traditional slasher cinema is solved "either through eliminating the woman (earlier victims) or reconstituting her as masculine (Final Girl)."[380] In contemporary horror cinema this lack has been solved by the abject. The woman is not perceived as lacking the penis as she uses the abject as an alternative to phallicising herself. Edwards and Grualand observe that displaying bodies in all of their diversity and highlighting bodily functions, has the "potential to subvert patriarchal gender codes."[381] Yet embracing the body in all of its stages of youth, age, sickness, decay, sizes and more one can

[377] C. Pateman, *The Sexual Contract* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1988), 96
[378] M. Zettell, *Cellar Door* (Six Sense Productions, 2007)
[379] J. D. Edwards and R. Grauland, *Grotesque* (New York: Routledge 2013), 32.
[380] C.J. Clover. *Men, Women and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film.* (New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1993), 50.
[381] J. D. Edwards and R. Grauland, *Grotesque* (New York: Routledge 2013), 32.

"resist absorption into the objectifying gaze that seeks to contain them."[382] The abject provides a site of resistance for those who embrace it. The idea of the Surviving Woman as powerful through the abject provides an alternative to her being masculine. The idea of becoming through abjection still relies on a female body because the relationship women hold with the abject allows them to contain it, channel it, without it leading to monstrosity.

The theory of becoming is also linked within Deleuze's work through the figure of the girl. Within her Final Girl theory, Clover uses the term "girl" in order to designate age but within Deleuzian and feminist theory this term connotes so much more. As Catherine Driscoll writes however for Deleuze the figure of the girl is linked with becoming-woman. The girl is "an assemblage which moves through and escapes the foundational territory of the Oedipalised family."[383] This allows the figure of the girl to disengage from the oppositions that are created within the Oedipus complex, such as "masculine and feminine, subject and object, presence and lack."[384] The figure of the girl within Deleuzian theory is one without limits or restraints, for these "girls do not belong to an age group, sex, order, or kingdom: they slip everywhere, between orders, acts, ages, sexes."[385] Becoming-woman is tied in with this concept as "becoming-woman produces the universal girl,"[386] because the process of becoming "produces an identity which is not an outcome of the process but is that process."[387] Clover deploys the use of the term girl to delineate an age and nothing further. The characters she examines are biologically, within the diegesis at the very least, girls.
The idea of becoming and how it relates to horror can be read through the film *Jennifer's Body* (2009). Jennifer is targeted as a potential virgin sacrifice by a band who want to make it big without actually working for it. They plan to do this by calling forth a demon and feeding Jennifer to it, thereby, gaining themselves a wish from the demon. The fact that Jennifer is not a virgin causes their plan to backfire and instead of a virgin sacrifice they have brought forth a demon that possesses Jennifer. In order to maintain her physical appearance, the newly possessed body of Jennifer needs to eat people. Her best friend, Needy, figures out what has happened and tries to stop her; in the process Jennifer kills Chip, Needy's boyfriend

[382] Ibid.
[383] Ibid., 64-65.
[384] Ibid., 66.
[385] G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, trans. B. Massumi. (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), 322-323.
[386] Ibid., 323.
[387] C. Driscoll, "The Woman in Process: Deleuze, Kristeva and Feminism" in *Deleuze and Feminist Theory,* ed. I. Buchanan and C. Colebrook. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2000), 75.

and Needy ends up in a psychiatric ward. During their final fight, Needy is bitten by Jennifer and she becomes tainted by the demon. She now acquires some interesting superpowers; she gains strength and also Jennifer's ability to levitate. This allows Needy to escape her confines and seek revenge for what Jennifer became, both the actions Jennifer took while possessed and for what was done to her. Needy kills the band members as they were the instigators of all that happened. The last shot of the film is her leaving the hotel room in which she has massacred the band and gazing directly at a security camera, and as a result, directly at the audience. This ending shows that while she has hunted down and killed a group of people, she is not punished as a monstrous woman would usually be, but escapes this by being justified in her actions and also by being in control of her powers.

This is interesting from the point of view of the abject as once something is known, once it has been touched, it becomes easier to control. Jennifer does not ask for the demon, she knows nothing of it – rather, it is forced onto her and she is taken over completely by it. Needy on the other hand researches possession in an attempt to find out what has happened to her friend, while planning for the confrontation and because she has opened herself up to the possibilities she can handle the demonic characteristics she gains. This acceptance of her new demon aspect is demonstrated in the film through her using her powers willingly; in one scene she is confined to solitary confinement within the psychiatric ward and she uses her powers to float to the small window in order to look out. Her abilities are not shown to be something she detests and is cursed with, but something that has given her power over her life and the ability to avenge her friend's death. This also ties in with Rizzo's notion of closed and open characters in horror, discussed above. This aspect of Rizzo's theory is tied to examining the Surviving Woman as different in degrees of femininity from her friends, as opposed to being masculine where they are feminine.[388] For example, Jennifer definitely inhabits the stereotype of the popular girl, "obsessed with clothes, make-up, grooming, sex, boys and their bodies."[389] Needy on the other hand is her antithesis. Although she has a boyfriend and is sexually active these things are not her sole preoccupation. Needy's sole preoccupation within the film seems to be the well-being of Jennifer and the changes are happening with her. This aspect of Needy reflects the heightened connections between the Surviving Woman and her friends, which will be explored in more depth in chapter four.

[388] T. Rizzo. *Deleuze and Film: A Feminist Introduction*. (London: Continuum, 2012), 93.
[389] Ibid., 94.

Jennifer's Body also highlights a change from traditional to contemporary horror. As Linda Williams writes: "the female look – a look given prominent position in the horror film – shares the male fear of the monster's freakishness, but also recognises the sense in which this freakishness is similar to her own difference."[390] For Williams this is how monster and woman are connected through this shared sense of being other. As monsters have turned into killers from the 1930s to the 1970s/1980s and even more prominently from the 1990s to the 2000s, they have trended away from being sympathetic in anyway. A new connection has been made between monster and survivor and this is through the abject. As the Surviving Woman, Needy ends up incorporating aspects of the demon into her and this results in her actually being able to get justice for Jennifer and all those she killed. This tendency can be seen in other films as well, for example in *Scream 3* the person inhabiting the ghostface mask is Sidney's half-brother. In their final confrontation the killer lays dying, confused as to why after shooting Sidney she is not dead, until she reveals that she was wearing a bullet proof vest, the same as he was, and remarks, "I guess we think alike."[391] Sidney is biologically related to this incarnation of the killer, she literally has him in her blood. Identification, becoming a little like the thing you have to fight, is key to the Surviving Woman. This idea is also highlighted in the sequel to the 1974 *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (2013), a film featuring a Surviving Woman who is the cousin of Leatherface; in an unexpected twist she ends up being his caretaker. The blood tie she has with him wins out over her loyalty to her previous adopted family, who had been involved in the death of her biological family, and her friends. The attachment to the monster is now through blood. The connection between the monster and the Surviving Woman can no longer be done on the level of sympathy, but now is achieved through the killer and Surviving Woman being tied through the abject. This is how the Surviving Woman bests the killer, by playing the game on his terms, but doing it better as she does not get lost in the abject, she does not become like the killer instead harnesses the force and violence that he uses in order to stop him. This happens through her connection with the abject that allows her to not be destroyed by the abject and also maintain her control.

The world the killer creates, the world of the abject and of violence and death infects others. He brings with him a darkness that, for the duration of the film, takes over the world and that

[390] L. Williams, "When the Woman Looks" in *The Dread of Difference: Gender and the Horror Film,* ed. B. K. Grant (Austin: University of Texas UP, 1996), 20-21.
[391] W. Craven, *Scream 3* (Miramax, 2000)

spreads like a plague. As another film, *Kill Theory* (2009) shows, the threat of corporeal disintegration can lead people to do everything and anything to protect their own physical integrity. Here a man traps a group of college students in a house and gives them until 6am to kill the rest of the members of their group. As they attempt to escape or refuse to do what he orders they begin to get killed. As they get more desperate they turn on each other, until it seems that no one can be trusted. Ultimately two survive, one sacrificing himself for the sake of the other. However, what this film shows is that violence, the ability to do violence to others, is infectious. It is in this respect that violence, in the realm of horror, is represented as something that can corrupt and therefore it becomes a source of abject. Violence points out the fragility of boundaries that maintain civilised life, like the abject nature of law breaking, violence is threatening to society but also unleashes the physical signs of the abject through blood and death.

Writing about *Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles* Jennifer Culver states that "experiencing a violent act in anyway means that the person is *contaminated* by the violence. In other words, Sarah Connor's experiences have contaminated her turning her into a person infected by the violence and vision of the future presented to her."[392] This is manifested in her increasing aggressive behaviour and her inability to return to normal society, represented through her "repeated stays in psychiatric hospitals and eventual fugitive status."[393] Culver is drawing on René Girard's *Violence and the Sacred* (2013) and his theory that violence is a stain, a pollutant that will spread to anyone who comes into contact with those involved if the proper cleansing rituals are not observed. In this way violence emerges as abject. As Girard writes, "two men come to blows; blood is spilt; both men are thus rendered impure. Their impurity is contagious."[394] In the context of horror the female hero is contaminated not just by the blood spilt, nor the things she has witnessed but by the violence her attacker commits on her and her companions. She becomes stained by violence, like Sarah Connor does, and only through the violence against the killer will she be free of this stain. Thus Girard states: "only violence can put an end to violence."[395] The female hero must engage with the killer on his own terms in order to end the violence he has let loose on the world. Unlike Sarah Connor, the Surviving Woman can be cleansed of her violence. She must be the one to do it

[392] J. Culver, "Sarah Connor's Stain" in *Terminator and Philosophy*, ed. R. Brown and K. S. Decker (New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, 2009), 84.
[393] Ibid., 86.
[394] R. Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, trans. P. Gregory (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), 30.
[395] Ibid., 29.

because she is the one who needs to cleanse herself of it in order to get back into society. She has also already been exposed, "contamination is a terrible thing, and only those who are already contaminated would wilfully expose themselves to it."[396] She is the only one with knowledge of the violence and the strength to save the world. While 'stained' by the violence around her, she is still physically and mentally intact, and is the only person able to cleanse the world and herself of the killer. The threat of contamination has ensured that she is the last.

Like Ellen Ripley of the *Alien* series, Sarah Connor shares aspects of the Surviving Woman. What Culver does not explore, and what is significant, is that without contamination she would be unable to protect her son or the world. Sarah, like the Surviving Woman wields violence as a tool. It is a tool for survival, but also a tool to resume normality and for bettering one's life. In *While She Was Out* (2007), the Surviving Woman, Della, is an abused wife with two young children. Her days seem to be filled with keeping her husband happy, looking after her children and, as it is revealed in a phone call, doing a mechanics course that occurs before the night the film takes place. Whilst out doing last minute Christmas shopping she is set upon by a gang of youths in a parking lot. Prior to her encounter with these violent youths Della was too passive to react to any slights, wishing only to blend into the mainstream and look after her children. Her encounter with violence will lead her to reject her passivity and confront her husband.

After this encounter with the youths where they kill a security guard, she flees from them in her car. In her panic she crashes her car, she attempts to fix it using the tools bought for the mechanics course, but ends up fleeing when she is discovered by the youths again. One by one these youths attempt to kill her however she outsmarts and out-fights them. Using a range of tools from her toolbox she kills her assailants until their leader is the only one left alive. She shoots him with his own gun, then calmly fixes her car and drives home. Normally this would signal the end of violence, the end of the narrative and Della would have closure and peace. However, as a source of violence also resides in her home the only way the nightmare ends is with her husband. The closing scene shows her husband asking her if she got him anything for Christmas, to which she calmly responds "no" whilst aiming a gun at his head. Della is different from most Surviving Women in that the source of her violence does

[396] Ibid., 30.

not reside with those who set upon her but originates in the home. The conflict with the youths gives Della is the ability to confront this situation and end it once and for all.

Through the contamination of violence, Della gains power and strength. Where once she was weak, now she is strong. Like Sarah Connor, Della can fully protect herself and her children through violence. Targeted violence is the difference between the uncontrollable killer, or the monstrous woman, and the Surviving Woman. Her violence is directed to those who threaten her, oppress her, or endanger her and those that she loves. It is a protective violence, not bent on destruction, but associated with an ethic of caring.

The Final Girl struggled in the face of the abject, her removal from the realm of the feminine and the semiotic stops her from being able to comprehend the importance and the power of the abject. What the Surviving Woman does in this abject environment is thrive. She gains power in this world that she lacks prior to this, she wields violence for the first time and emerges triumphant. The Final Girl who reluctantly wielded violence and struggled to triumph is replaced by the Surviving Woman who knows that her only chance of survival is to play the killer's game on his terms but maintains control through understanding what she is opening herself up to. This idea of being open is what, ultimately separates the Final Girl and the Surviving Woman. In her fight the Final Girl becomes locked in to a masculine position, whereas the Surviving Woman becomes what she needs to be through perpetual movement and openness. The Surviving Woman's contact with the abject unleashes a very female heroism, a heroism that is being furthered through images of female heroism within the action genre.

Chapter Four.
Hero Time!:
The Surviving Woman as Hero.

"She becomes super by surpassing the limits of the human body and mind, either through rigorous training, an industrial accident, by virtue of being alien, mutation, or advanced evolution."

-Jennifer K. Stuller
Ink-stained Amazons and Cinematic Warriors

Buffy: "I guess everyone's alone, but…being a slayer, there's a burden we can't share."
Faith: "And no one else can feel it…Thank god we are hot chicks with superpowers."
Buffy: "Takes the edge off."

-Buffy the Vampire Slayer
"End of Days"

The previous chapter explored how the abject works within contemporary horror narratives to imbue the Surviving Woman with the power to take down the killer. This chapter extends that idea, as well as exploring characters that breach the lines that divide the Surviving Woman and the female action hero. The chapter will explore the Surviving Woman as a female hero through the film series *Alien* and *Resident Evil*, as well as the television series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. It will also examine how developments in the depiction of the female hero in action and science fiction films has influenced the development of the Surviving Woman who not only defeats the killer but frequently engages him in a fight were she struggles with him, lures him into traps and aggressively defends her life, and more frequently the lives of others.

Becker and Eagly define heroes as "individuals who choose to take risks on behalf of one or more other people, despite the possibility of dying or suffering serious physical consequences."[397] The emphasis on risk taking as well as the public nature of heroic deeds

[397] S. W. Becker and A. H. Eagly, "The Heroism of Men and Women," *American Psychologist*, 59, no. 3 (2004), 164.

has resulted in male figures featuring prominently in the role of hero.[398] The idea of heroic action has developed from ancient Greece and was "rooted in ideas about personal honour, or considerations of individual worth and value, which were enmeshed within a social, political, economic and cultural framework that was family centred, unequal, hierarchical, male-dominated, largely poor, and frequently violent."[399] Women are frequently excluded from the heroic because they lack access to the public space in which heroism can be achieved. Even in fiction the female hero is marginalised because she enacts heroism differently than her male counterpart. The differences between how male and female heroes enact heroism will be detailed through this chapter. Some of these differences are: female heroes being connected to the community that they are protecting, being tied closer to their bodies, as opposed to bodies that are merely tools, and the use of language.

Female heroism is often overlooked as it differs from the traditional, male-oriented definition of the term. When a woman does embody the characteristics of heroism her actions are justified by her role as mother, for example, her natural urge to protect her child making her do what would normally be impossible for a mere human. Importantly, acted out by a woman heroism defies entrenched gendered expectations. Yet sometimes this heroism is viewed as a transgression; she is betraying her sex and acting in an abnormal way. The historical figure of Joan of Arc, who has been immortalised in film numerous times, represents female heroism as transgression. Joan of Arc stepped out of the accepted position women were allowed, took on male attire and cut her hair short. Aside from these cosmetic changes, she also went in to battle and fought for her country. She was placed on trial and some of the charges against her were connected to her rejection of standard femininity.[400] Her actions were construed as transgressive because she exceeded the acceptable limits for women within her time.

Moreover the actions of a female hero are never considered to be just heroic actions; there is always some reason or some abomination that makes her act as she does. Traditionally in heroic narratives women are placed in the role of sidekick or romantic partner. Yvonne Tasker states that women have often been placed only in supporting roles, as "a prize or

[398] Ibid., 175.
[399] M. G. Kendrick, *The Heroic Ideal: Western Archetypes from the Greeks to the Present* (North Carolina: McFarland and Co, 2010), 5
[400] V. R., Hotchkiss, "Transvestism on Trial: The Case of Jeanne D'Arc" in *Clothes Make the Man: Cross-dressing in Medieval Europe* (London: Routledge, 2012), 49-68.

passively awaited rescue."[401] Heroic deeds require action, strength and determination, all traits traditionally considered to be held by men. These attributes are associated primarily with masculinity. Even in film narratives women were denied the power to be heroes until the 1990s. In western storytelling women often feature as the person who needs to be rescued, as opposed to the person who does the rescuing. To act is un-womanly; one must be passive and wait for a male hero to come to the rescue.

Brave and muscular, the male hero will dive in sword swinging or guns blazing – he is the norm of the traditional narratives for heroic deeds and actions. Action is, to some extent, derived as a requirement for masculinity. His acts are never viewed as transgressive, nor does his ability to act heroically need to be justified through recourse to his familial obligations. "The action hero has a control over his own body that has historically been denied to women, the weaker, 'softer' sex," he is created out of his domination of his own body and control over his own body shows he is capable of saving the world.[402] Male heroism is the standard and as such "is so engrained in our culture that we hardly notice him,"[403] no one is surprised by a male hero. A woman within the role of hero can save the world, get the guy or girl if she so desires and can manage to do so without being forced to inhabit a masculine position by becoming like the male hero and isolating herself from others. Women have been denied a lineage of female heroes. Caudill asserts that "when female heroes have undertaken the quest, scholars have denied them the role of hero, choosing instead to define them as handmaidens to the male object of their quest."[404] Women's potential has often been seen as secondary to that of the male hero. Those who recognised as heroes in their own right often have been viewed as exceptional, and as a result they are still denied the ability to form a history. What the heroic women of action and horror show is that female heroism exists, they show that this should not be pushed aside and this offers opportunities for new interpretations, challenges and redefinitions of what it means to be a hero. The beginnings of the contemporary action female hero can be found in the portrayals of Calamity Jane and Annie Oakley in 1800s dime

[401] Y. Tasker, *The Hollywood Action and Adventure Film* 66
[402] D. Heinecken. *The Warrior Women of Television* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2003), 1
[403] S. A. Inness, *Tough Girls: Women Warriors and Wonder Women in Popular Culture* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania UP, 1999), 17.
[404] H. Caudill, "Tall, Dark and Dangerous: Xena, the Quest, and the wielding of sexual violence in *Xena* on-line fan fiction" in *Athena's Daughters: Television's New Women Warriors*, ed. F. Early and K. Kennedy (New York: Syracuse UP, 2003), 27.

Westerns; these characters were followed by female detectives in 1930s pulp novels.[405] This female crime fighting trend continued into the 1960s with television shows like *The Avengers (*1961-1969) and moved into the crime fighting heroes of the Blaxploitation era of the 1970s.[406] The 1970s and 1980s constitute the start of the contemporary female hero with the characters of Lt. Ellen Ripley of the *Alien* franchise and Sarah Connor of the *Terminator* series, both of whom shall be discussed at length in this chapter. These two characters paved the way for the success of other female-led narratives, which exploded in the 1990s and beyond.[407] Like the historical female heroes that have often been the exception to the rule, these fictional characters "have always existed…what has changed are the sheer numbers."[408] As is emphasised throughout this thesis, difference, understanding difference as an essential aspect and moving away from a strict adherence to the concept of a gender binary, is crucial to understanding how women can be active subjects within a narrative and not be constrained by the terms masculine and feminine. The female hero's difference is important to her characterisation as female and hero. The term female hero itself is important because it "is a *positive* term in its ability to highlight and celebrate her femaleness in tandem with her heroism."[409] It is used to differentiate between male and female characters who enact heroism and also as a way to indicate that the heroism the female hero is enacting is markedly different from that of her male counterpart. To deny the importance of her femaleness is to limit her potential and difference as a feminist figure. The existence of these many female characters who act heroically may not be entirely because of feminism or to further the feminist cause. However their existence demonstrates that there is "the *possibility* of imagining a woman in a man's place without her being first drawn in stereotypical fashion as femme fatale, dominatrix, or rape victim."[410]

In her work, Clover acknowledges the difference between heroines and heroes. "The Final Girl (1) undergoes agonizing trials, and (2) virtually or actually destroys the antagonist and

[405] S. A. Inness, "Introduction: 'Boxing Gloves and Bustiers': New Images of Tough Women" in in *Action Chicks: New Images of Tough Women in Popular Culture*, ed. S. A. Inness (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 2-3
[406] Ibid.
[407] Ibid.
[408] Ibid., 3.
[409] L. M. Campbell, "Introduction" in *A Quest of her Own: essays on the Female Hero in Modern Fantasy*, ed. L. M. Campbell (North Carolina: McFarland & Co, 2014), 7.
[410] R. Schubart, *Super Bitches and Actions Babes: The Female Hero in Popular Cinema, 1970-2006* (London: MacFarland & Company, 2007), 176.

saves herself."[411] For Clover the second point is what changes the dynamic of the Final Girl's level of heroism. If the Final Girl had gone on being saved by the intervention at the last minute of a male figure, as she had been in the Final Girl's infancy, then she would have maintained her status as heroine. However, as she moves beyond this and begins to fight and kill the killer on her own she becomes a hero. This for Clover is part of the masculinisation of the Final Girl, "those who save themselves are male, and those who are saved by others are female."[412] Clover writes: "sex…proceeds from gender, not the other way around."[413] She sees gender as derived from the function of the character and not the biological sex of the character. Final Girls are figurative males, any power they gain throughout the narrative is attributed to them taking up the masculine position and denying their femininity. Heroic deeds, it seems to Clover, can only be performed from the masculine position and female characters who do not take up this position are destined for victimhood. In other words, her argument does not make room for true female heroism, expressed as the ability of a female character acting heroically without her deeds being reduced to her masculinity. Clover only allows for the female character as hero if she inhabits a masculine position. Her argument suppresses the body enacting the heroism beneath her gendered reading of the character.

Clover asserts that action is a genre suited for male heroism and horror is suited to female heroism because horror places a greater emphasis on the victim aspect of heroism. [414] The action film hero may "indeed wallow in suffering" but this suffering is counterbalanced by "extended frenzies of sadism of a sort exceptional in horror."[415] The victim aspect of the male action hero is counteracted by the scenes of him defeating his foes. Because the Final Girl is often only victorious at the last moment, her suffering is prolonged and her retaliation limited. Her suffering is also of a different degree than his. The suffering of the male action hero also differs to the suffering of the female hero of horror, their suffering being a "far messier and less wholesome business."[416] This is tied to the relative passivity of the fight that the Final Girl wages against her attacker, as mentioned in chapter one. Indeed her fight is more of a struggle, the difference between fight and struggle being the distinction between

[411] C.J. Clover. *Men, Women and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film.* (New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1993), 59.
[412] Ibid.
[413] Ibid., 13.
[414] Ibid.., 18.
[415] Ibid.
[416] Ibid.

the active pursuit of confrontation and the forced confrontation after attempting to run away. During her struggle the Final Girl alternates between stereotypically feminine characteristics, such as fleeing, weakness and being penetrated, and masculine traits like displaying strength, aggression and the ability to penetrate.[417] The traditional male action hero does not deviate from his alignment with his masculinity, rather he is aggressive in his fight and rarely is a male star in an action film presented as displaying terror. For example, the character Harry Callahan in *Dirty Harry* (1971) does not display fear when he faces off against criminals. Harry in this role is only depicted as unerringly determined to do the right thing for justice even at the expense of the legal rights, "when an adult male is chasing a female with intent to commit rape, I shoot the bastard – that's my policy."[418] Fear does not come into the portrayal of his character. Clover's definitions of what is appropriate within the separate genres are blurred and contradicted within the character of the female hero of action-horror hybrids.

The traditional female hero stands apart from others, "she must display little or no fear, even in the most dangerous circumstances; if she does show fear, it must not stop her from acting."[419] One of the ways in which the Surviving Woman of horror has influenced the depiction of female heroism is in this regard. Fear is a celebrated feeling in horror cinema. Not only should the audience feel it, but the 'aware character,' namely the Surviving Woman, must feel it as well. Fear is the initial impetus for the Surviving Woman's actions or the thing that saves her initially. Sherrie Inness is perhaps wrong in one respect: fear that freezes has the potential to save, a noise that frightens, a shadow that appears in front of them, can stop the female hero from meeting with instant death. Fear can give the Surviving Woman the opportunity to reassess her situation, to take stock of what she is fighting, and also what keeps her alive where others die because they, unlike her, did not feel sufficiently frightened by the dark house with the creaky stairs.

With the blurring of genre lines some texts have created hybrids between action and horror and as such have incorporated aspects of the surviving woman and the female hero into one character. For example, *Alien*, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Resident Evil* all feature characters who incorporate aspects of action and horror in the narratives and their depiction

[417] Ibid., 63.
[418] D. Siegel, *Dirty Harry* (Warner Bros, 1971)
[419] S. A. Inness, *Tough Girls: Women Warriors and Wonder Women in Popular Culture* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania UP, 1999), 25.

of women. Jennifer K. Stuller found that as a young girl there were few female heroes on the screen for girls to admire and in the 1970s she was limited to Wonder Woman, later followed by *Charlie's Angels* and *The Bionic Woman*.[420] Since then she has found a growing range of female heroes on screen and in print, but she states that "although women's roles have evolved, and in fact, female *and* male roles have changed, modern hero stories, like those of classic world myth, continue to focus on male experience and fantasy."[421] Women continue to be relegated to supporting roles. Horror however allows a female body, even if she has been read as masculine, to save herself. She does not support a male hero, nor does she wait for someone to save her. Like the surviving woman the female hero inhabits the active space that is usually only allowed for male heroes: "As the 'star' of the series the female hero not only assumes the central role but destroys conventional ideas of the female body as passive, as to be looked at, as controlled by men. The female hero *takes up space.*"[422]This is an important point; women have often been encouraged to take up as little space as possible. "From an early age women are taught to restrict their bodies and retreat while men are encouraged to dominate the space,"[423]and the importance of a female character on screen who actively takes up space and dominates the screen cannot be under-stated. Even in films where she is ultimately saved by the intervention of a last-minute male character she has fled and fought in order to keep herself alive for that length of time. It is from this character of the Final Girl that Ripley emerges, an action hero who is the hero of the film. Ripley saves the world, temporarily, without male intervention and in spite of male intervention as well.

The female hero of action films merges with the female hero of horror in films that blur genre lines between the two. Lt. Ellen Ripley of the *Alien* series (1979-1997), the first *Alien* has been described as a slasher/science fiction hybrid.[424] As the series progresses the horror elements become more intermingled with action as the series includes big explosions alongside dank, dark, dripping tunnel-like corridors. It is within these elements that the connection between horror and action is cemented as well as the character of Ripley. Ripley occupies a connecting space between action and horror. As the Surviving Woman in the

[420] J. K. Stuller, *Ink-Stained Amazons and Cinematic Warriors: Superwomen in Modern Mythology* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2010), 1-2.
[421] Ibid., 4.
[422] D. Heinecken. *The Warrior Women of Television* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2003), 21.
[423] N. Richardson. *Transgressive Bodies: Representations in Film and Popular Culture*. (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing, 2010), Kindle eBook.
[424] C.J. Clover. *Men, Women and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film.* (New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1993), 23.

series she takes a journey that combines aspects of horror and action into one character. What makes Ripley different from male action heroes is the journey her character and her body goes through over the course of the four films.

In the first film Ripley seeks to make sacrifices for the good of the ship, and to keep the creature out, as it has attached itself to the face of a male crew member, but she is overruled by other crew members. Her authority and her instincts, are perceived by the rest of the crew as unwarranted paranoia, and essentially ignored as it often is the case with many Surviving Women. Inness writes that Ripley is guided by a moral code that is far superior to her fellow crewmates, she is able to make the tough decisions and "for her, toughness is not just a physical attribute but a moral one. She speaks the truth, even when no one wishes to hear it."[425] Ripley is proved right and the alien gives birth to itself through the crew member and then systematically begins killing its way through the crew, until Ripley alone is left alive. Ripley manages to make it to an escape shuttle only to realise that the creature is still with her. With some quick thinking she dresses in a space suit and blasts the alien out, however, as is the habit of horror films, the creature is not that easily expelled. The alien is stuck to the projectile gun bolt that Ripley shot at it, in order to force it out of the airlock. As the final blow Ripley torches the alien with the engines. Many aspects of this final fight resemble the fight of the horror heroes as they struggle to make sure their attacker is dead. But here this is not so much a fight of brawn, as it often is with male action heroes, but one of smarts. This is Ripley's first encounter with the alien creature but it is not her last. Inness writes that Ripley is ultimately saved by a lack of emotion; she knows what needs to be done and has detached herself from feeling. Ripley it appears scan only become a tough hero when she has separated herself from feelings as "our culture considers toughness and displays of emotion to be antithetical."[426]

As the series progresses Ripley displays more and more emotion. *Aliens* (1986) is more of an action film, Ripley having survived her first encounter is thrown back into close proximity with the alien because of a distress call, sent off with military backing. This time Ripley is once again largely ignored until the alien creatures start killing everyone. It seems that even though Ripley holds all the information on these creatures, because she is neither part of the

[425] S. A. Inness, *Tough Girls: Women Warriors and Wonder Women in Popular Culture* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania UP, 1999), 106.
[426] Ibid.

military nor a man of authority her knowledge is seen as that of a traumatised, potentially hysterical woman. It is within this instalment that we see Ripley's emotional side as well as her maternal side. The importance of emotion within the character of the Surviving Woman will be examined in more detail in the next chapter.

This was glimpsed in the first film with her dedication to the cat, Jonesy. Within *Aliens* Ripley forms a bond with a young girl, Newt. Ripley learns that in the gap of years between the first film and the second she has lost her daughter and when she encounters Newt she takes over the role of mother. It has been argued that "introducing a maternal relationship emphasizes her femininity, again providing a socially acceptable 'excuse' for female violence."[427] As stated earlier female heroism operates differently from male heroism. Ripley's violence towards the Alien mother is caused by her protective instincts towards Newt and "not an assertion of her individual courage or an act of revenge,"[428] which are "the two primary motives in Western heroism."[429] This focus on the maternal as the motivation for an act of violence from a female character is often considered to be a negative aspect as her motivations are constructed differently from a male hero in the same situation. However, difference is the key to female characters operating as more than just pseudo men within the narratives. Highlighting the caring aspect differentiates Ripley, and others than follow this mould, from their male counterparts. Having a reason for committing violence is an aspect of female heroism but to have a reason to commit violence does not create an "excuse" for wielding violence. Justifying violence through protection of the weak, and through love, is, as Stuller writes, "a different motivation from that of a quest for a prize, be it grail, fleece, dragon, or damsel."[430] The implications of this are often seen to be negative, as it is often seen as forcing women to justify their actions, whereas male violence is often seen as needing no justification. However, a motivation, such as an empathetic care for the world, should not be seen as a negative aspect but as a redeeming one, and one that male heroes in popular culture should be striving for.

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[427] J. K. Stuller, *Ink-Stained Amazons and Cinematic Warriors: Superwomen in Modern Mythology* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2010), 61.
[428] J.C. Cawleti, "Mascuine Myths and Feminist Revisions: Some Thoughts on the Future of Popular Genres" in Eye *on the Future: Popular Culture Scholarship into the Twenty First Century,* eds. M. F. Motz, J. G. Nachbar, M. T. Marsden and R. J. Ambrosetti (Bowling Green: Bowling Green UP, 1994) 130.
[429] Ibid.
[430] J. K. Stuller, *Ink-Stained Amazons and Cinematic Warriors: Superwomen in Modern Mythology* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2010), 81.

This idea of women's toughness being excused through her maternal role is also explored in *Terminator* (1984) through the figure of Sarah Connor. As noted in the previous chapter, Sarah is stained by the knowledge of a future in which machines have taken over the world and her awareness that humanity's only hope is her son, John Connor. "Sarah's toughness is controlled by her re-inscription as a mother. Notably, *she* is not going to save the world; her son will,"[431] however what is more notable is that she is the one who takes all the actions to thwart this future before it happens. Sarah Connor's heroism is sometimes qualified as arising "directly from the maternal instinct to protect her son,"[432] but embracing a personal reason for adopting violence does not change the fact that she is the one who is protecting the world. Also of note is that in the television show based on the movie series the focus has truly shifted from her son as saviour to her. This shift is significant because it moves Sarah from being the mother and mentor in the series to being the hero. This is shown in the title *Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles* (2008-2009): the show focuses on how Sarah takes actions to protect her son and also to save the world. The shift from Sarah as protecting the saviour to being the saviour can also be connected to the increased acceptability of a female character in the role of saviour, through *Xena: Warrior Princess* and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* in particular, in the intervening years between *Terminator 2* and *The Sarah Connor Chronicles.* Although motherhood is seen as an excuse for female violence, justifying violence should not be a negative thing. Male heroic violence, as observed, often is committed by a male character who is detached from the community that he is fighting to protect. These heroes are driven by an abstract idea of justice and morality. The female hero, on the other hand is motivated by an ethics of care for both the world and the individuals in it, highlighting the importance of care for the world that you are fighting for. This will be examined further with reference to *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*.

The nature of Ripley's fight does situate her, in the end, closer to the action genre than to horror. Ripley is not only focussed on her own survival, or even the survival of loved ones; she is trying to protect the world and she sacrifices herself for the greater good. Ripley also inhabits a world where guns work, the horror hero is never quite this lucky as guns inevitably fail at the crucial moment. Her access to functional weaponry makes her fight more distanced

[431] S. A. Inness, *Tough Girls: Women Warriors and Wonder Women in Popular Culture* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania UP, 1999), 125.
[432] A. Dancey, "Killer Instincts: Motherhood and Violence in *The Long Kiss Goodbye* and *Kill Bill"* in *Mommy Angst: Motherhood in American Popular Culture,* eds. A. C. Hall and M. J. Bishop (California: ABC-CLIO, 2009), 82

than that of the Surviving Woman. Ripley, unlike the Surviving Woman, does not have to concern herself with hand-to-hand combat with a physically superior foe. The Surviving Woman often grapples hand to hand with her attacker and is often outweighed by the size and strength of her attacker, but Ripley is rarely shown doing so. The one scene in which she does engage the enemy physically she uses a mechanical loader. The mechanical loader detracts from the size difference between her and the alien queen, placing them on a relatively even basis. Her enemy is larger and more omnipresent than the average horror film killer, though somewhat similar to the creatures in *The Descent*. Ripley must not only pit her wits against a homicidal alien species, whose only real purpose is the destruction of everything that it comes into contact with, but also a corporation and a military branch that see the alien as the ultimate weapon and will destroy anyone who comes between it and them. Ripley is fighting against the abuse of power, the threat to the world and for the greater good of humanity. She is considered to be the beginning of the self–saving female hero: "prior to Alien, a woman might have discovered the beast, run from it, submitted to it, acted as bait, poked it, prodded it, hurt it, even delivered the coup de grace, but she never ever did these things alone; some man was always there."[433] The aims of Ripley's fight are slightly more grandiose than the average survivor of horror for the weight of the world and humanity rests upon her shoulders. Nevertheless, Ripley has within her character aspects of the Surviving Woman, particularly as she developed into a self-rescuing, active female hero.

Like the Surviving Woman who has emerged from the Final Girl, the superwoman has emerged from predecessors who were "girl sidekicks, girl heroes, girl sleuths, and girl reporters; 'Girl' meaning not yet woman, not quite mature, not entirely whole."[434] The character of Buffy begins her journey as a teenage girl and grows with the series into an adult woman. As she matures she becomes more autonomous and less under the instruction of her mentor. Importantly, she does not become more masculinised, nor detached from those around her. Her transition from girl to woman does not become a journey from feminine to masculine, as Clover argues was the case with the Final Girl.[435] Buffy developed out of the stereotypical blonde girl who would die after turning into a dark alley and being set upon by some monster. Her creator, Joss Whedon, decided he wanted to create a female character who

[433] X. Gallardo C. & C.J. Smith, *Alien Woman: The Making of Lt. Ellen Ripley* (New York: Continuum, 2004), 22.
[434] J. K. Stuller, *Ink-Stained Amazons and Cinematic Warriors: Superwomen in Modern Mythology* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2010), 13.
[435] C.J. Clover. *Men, Women and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film.* (New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1993), 50.

would turn this on its head, having sympathy for this character who was always the victim, and he created a hero from her.[436] While *Buffy* is often discussed and dealt with as an action text, it has not forgotten its roots in horror. This is demonstrated through the use of traditional horror movie villains, such as vampires, zombies and werewolves. The settings for *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* also prompt similarities through the use of the suburb and the many scenes that take place in cemeteries. Moreover death is at the forefront of *Buffy*, with her fellow classmates and other people within the town dying regularly at the hands of the town's monsters.

As the series progressed and the show gained a bigger following and a bigger budget, it created more impressive action scenes. For example, the season three finale involves Buffy fighting a monster who is so large that he can only be destroyed at the cost of blowing up her high school.[437] This aspect of *Buffy* draws it away from its horror roots strengthening its alignment with the action genre, however, *Buffy* can also be read as an action text through its lack of bodies. As we have seen, horror is traditionally littered with bodies. However in *Buffy* the protagonist's opponents, particularly the run of the mill vampires that feature heavily in the show, turn to dust when Buffy defeats them. The impact of this lack of bodies is shown also when bodies do not disappear. When a non-evil person dies this is shown, the true horror of death in *Buffy* is shown through the death of loved ones, friends and acquaintances'. For example, when Buffy's mother dies the episode, titled merely "The Body," is about just that. The body, the unfairness of death, the ending of someone's life. This is where *Buffy* reveals itself as a horror text in how death is foregrounded when it is not of the demonic. The deaths of those around her are also what turn Buffy from a girl hero to a superwoman, or a Surviving Woman. The deaths of those whom she loves coincide with significant aspects of her life. After she loses her virginity to her vampire boyfriend, Angel, he turns evil and this leads to the death of her mentor's girlfriend. This teaches Buffy about the loss of innocence, and how the decisions in her life impact those around her. The death of her mother forces Buffy to assume the role of mother to her younger sister. The death of best friend Willow's partner, Tara, forces Buffy to treat her sister like an equal. Buffy now learns to balance her maternal and sisterly responsibilities in order to forge a closer relationship with her sister. Like the

[436] J. K. Stuller, *Ink-Stained Amazons and Cinematic Warriors: Superwomen in Modern Mythology* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2010), 74.
[437] J. Whedon, "Graduation Day, part 2," *Buffy The Vampire Slayer*, Season 3, Ep. 22, directed by Joss Whedon, aired 6 September, 1999. (California: Mutant Enemy, 1999) DVD.

Surviving Woman of horror films who learns from every death she witnesses that she must fight to live, Buffy learns her lesson.

Like Ripley and Sarah Connor, the fate of the world rests on Buffy. However, *Buffy* the film also deals with issues of life that are emphasised and dramatised through the rhetoric of survival. As Patricia Pender writes, "high school equals hell, and hell equals high school."[438] Like *Scream* the bulk of *Buffy* plotlines deal with issues of everyday life told through demons and monsters. Like Sidney Prescott, Buffy loses her virginity but is not punished, and as a result is given the opportunity to fulfil the role of hero and stop her boyfriend who is trying to end the world. As a horror hero Buffy should have been punished for this, for the film to meet genre expectations. Furthermore the treatment of virginity in both *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Scream* demonstrates a change in the representation of sexuality tied with the Surviving Woman. The person who betrayed her now is destroyed and Buffy is not weakened by lacking her virginity. Her boyfriend's betrayal could be seen as punishment, however, as we saw, it is treated as an opportunity for Buffy to learn and develop as a hero. Like Sidney, she ultimately emerges from it stronger and is angered at being betrayed and toyed with. Buffy's character is key in the changes to the sexual nature of the hero of horror. It is not her purity of body that is the key to her survival but how she uses her body, how she reacts to the world around her.

Also in common with *Scream, Buffy* articulates a unique connection with its audience by using some of the same characters and events of the slasher film to stand in for real life fears of teenagers. Due to its long run the audience become invested in the characters: "everything is grounded in the audience's identification with what they are going through."[439] This is particularly evident when Buffy loses her virginity only to have a boyfriend turn bad. One other episode that features real life problems is in an episode called "Earshot," in which the themes of high school violence and suicide are scrutinized. While the demons, vampires and hellish attempts to end the world remain central in *Buffy*, just as the psychotic killer in *Scream*, what holds the audience to the show are the emotional aspects and connections, the feelings of confronting fears and ultimately of winning. Buffy's role as hero is one that is

[438] P. Pender, "I'm Buffy and You're….History: The Postmodern Politics of *Buffy*" in *Fighting the Forces: What's at Stake in Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, ed. R. V. Wilcox and D. Lavery (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002), 42.
[439] R. Wilcox & D. Lavery, "Introduction" in *Fighting the Forces: What's at Stake in Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, ed. R. V. Wilcox and D. Lavery (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002), xxiv.

characterised by her interpersonal relationships, her emotions and her losses, as much as by her strength and skills.

Through this fixation on emotions and feeling Buffy also represents a feminine approach to heroism. This is shown through her dress, use of language and her connection to her friends and family. Often fighting in skirts and halter tops, she is the antithesis of the super butch woman such as the character of Velazquez in *Aliens*. Crucially Buffy does not need to turn into a man in order to fight. Positing the character of Buffy as a feminist icon is difficult as opinions amongst scholars differ. Hill, for one, asserts that *Buffy* "presents a postmodernist mixture of different feminist "waves:" the third wave including the riot grrrlz, second wave "victim" feminism, and the postfeminist "girl power" movement."[440] The show essentially raises feminist issues related to differing waves without committing itself to one strict idea of what feminism is. This shows *Buffy* to be unconcerned with the static image of what someone is and more concerned with what someone is becoming.

"The social conventions of mainstream femininity, which have so often been used to argue that women cannot be warriors, are often precisely what make Buffy such an effective soldier in her speculative world."[441] Her penchant for make-up and heels is not an impediment to her fighting, nor is her insistence on having friends and dating a detraction from her role as hero. In fact, Inness writes that "clothing is an important element in the performance of toughness because it serves as a visual reminder that a woman has distanced herself from femininity."[442] Buffy's clothes signal the opposite. She dresses femininely and does not need to prove through her clothing that she is tough and heroic. She knows she has been chosen to wield the power that keeps the world safe and does not need to alter her dress to signal her power. Each episode of *Buffy* shows the audience how, regardless of her outward signifiers of femininity, Buffy is tough and a true hero. This is signalled also by her willingness to risk her own life for others and her sense of responsibility. *Buffy* shows that being attractive does not affect one's ability to be a hero. For example, in season four, Buffy briefly teams up with a military organisation called the Initiative. The Initiative are a group of specially selected soldiers who are trained to neutralise and contain demons. They all wear military fatigues and do not ask

[440] K. Hill, "Buffy's Voice," *Feminist Media Studies*, 13, no. 4 (2013), 727.
[441] S. Buttersworth, "Bite Me: Buffy and the penetration of the gendered warrior-hero," *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies*, 16, no. 2 (2002), 185.
[442] S. A. Inness, *Tough Girls: Women Warriors and Wonder Women in Popular Culture* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania UP, 1999), 25.

questions about the orders they receive. Buffy refuses to wear what the soldiers wear and "her refusal to mitigate her visible femininity by donning combat fatigues similarly disrupts the Initiative's cohesion."[443] Importantly, she suffers no consequences. This is just one aspect of Buffy's character that does signal to the head of the Initiative, Maggie Walsh, that Buffy is not willing to become one of the unquestioning soldiers and actually constitutes a threat to her rule. Buffy's individuality, and especially her femininity, are disruptive aspects that go against traditional ideas of heroism and what constitutes the feminine.

Stulller has noted that, on the face of it Buffy embodies the "Kick-Ass Babe – a talented and capable woman whose beauty deflected the focus from her otherwise transgressive acts."[444] This was a character type that emerged in the 1970s, with *Charlie's Angels* in particular, as an attempt to win over female audiences by incorporating aspects of the feminist movement whilst not alienating male viewers.[445] Heinecken writes however that "even if we say that female heroes remain a visual spectacle, this is not necessarily a bad thing," the difference between the visual spectacle that women provide in classical cinema, where they are the objects of the gaze, and the visual spectacle of the female hero is that "the spectacle female action heroes provide to others is less important than whether the spectacle encourages the viewer to read the female hero as lust object or as subject of her own actions."[446] Her to-be-looked-at-ness can be used to subvert ideas about active women on screen, in opposition to the films Mulvey analysed in "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema." In those instances women were filmed "in close-up, fragmented, giving the sense, that the woman is set apart from the world around her."[447] That woman "is frequently a contradictory figure, functioning simultaneously as eye candy and as a figure of power, reaffirming the notion of strength as a "masculine" quality at the same time that she reveals the falsity of this assumption.[448] By depicting Buffy in states of very feminine dress means she may be perceived as lacking in strength, but this perception is quickly invalidated when she proceeds to defend herself and others against an attack from a supernatural creature. Because the female hero is both

[443] S. Buttersworth, "Bite Me: Buffy and the Penetration of the Gendered Warrior-Hero," *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies*, 16, no. 2 (2002), 192.
[444] J. K. Stuller, *Ink-Stained Amazons and Cinematic Warriors: Superwomen in Modern Mythology* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2010), 44.
[445] Ibid.
[446] D. Heinecken. *The Warrior Women of Television* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2003), 26-27.
[447] Ibid., 26.
[448] Ibid., 29.

pleasing to look at and a character in action she subverts the link between women purely as objects and helps shift the definition to women as subjects, as sources of their own power.

As seen, Buffy helps in the separation between women as objects of the gaze and women as powerful subjects in a number of ways. Action texts "tend to show the entire body of female heroes, showing them as figures in motion against a landscape."[449] This undermines the view of the female hero as merely an object of the gaze; she is not held in close-up or statically for long periods of time, rather she is a figure in perpetual motion. She is in control of her image and chooses to embody a rather feminine physicality whilst still wielding power. Moreover Buffy is not entirely, purely human, and the influence of horror allows her to push past the potential shallowness of these earlier representations of active female heroism. Buffy as vampire slayer is tied to the darkness she fights. This is not only shown through her relationships with friendly vampires over the seasons, but also through her relationship with death. Buffy dies twice over the series run and twice she comes back. This is where the horror aspect of her character is highlighted; she is not entirely human, not entirely clean and proper: "Buffy's status as a slayer, and thus a superhero, set her apart from the norm."[450] Like the Surviving Woman who gains power from the abject and is as a result tied closer to her killer, Buffy must incorporate the power of her foes within herself. This is demonstrated not only in her death and return, but also in an episode in which she drinks vampire blood to learn the nature of her power.[451] Her death is presented as being "somehow beside the point. Even when death happens the body remains."[452] It is through this body that she is brought back, once through resuscitation and the second time brought back from a decaying corpse through magic. Each time Buffy thwarts death she becomes a little less human but much more powerful. The relationship *Buffy* holds to death is also reflective of a darker approach to heroism: "A certain fluidity between life and death is suggested by the frequency with which characters move back and forth between death and life as do vampires, zombies, Buffy and Angel."[453] *Buffy* conveys a certain blasé attitude to death. If a character dies through supernatural means, then that death is temporary. If, like Buffy's mother and Tara, they die at

[449] Ibid., 26.
[450] J. K. Stuller, *Ink-Stained Amazons and Cinematic Warriors: Superwomen in Modern Mythology* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2010), 81.
[451] J. Whedon, "Buffy vs. Dracula," *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, Season 5, Ep. 1, directed by David Solomon, aired 13 February, 2001 (California: Mutant Enemy, 2001), DVD.
[452] D. Heinecken. *The Warrior Women of Television* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2003), 145.
[453] Ibid.

the hands of illness or human violence their death is permanent and the grief that this causes becomes central to the episode in which it occurs. Throughout the course of the series Buffy becomes less and less wholly human and though this causes her to sometimes feel isolated from those she loves, it also allows her to be strong enough to save others and the world.

Alice from the *Resident Evil* series (2002-2012) is another representative of a cross-genre hero. This series deals with a zombie-infested future dystopia, a world put in danger because of the machinations of an evil corporation. Unlike the corporation in the *Alien* series, Umbrella have already destroyed the world. A few survivors are trying to find a safe place in the world, one of whom is Alice. Prior to the beginning of the zombie apocalypse Alice was trying to bring the corporation down in order to prevent a catastrophe, and even after the worst has happened she perseveres . The corporation infects Alice with the virus that has ended most of humanity, the T-virus.until now all other subjects that have come into contact with the virus they have been turned into brainless zombies or mutated creatures. Alice, however, bonds with the virus leaving her with strength and able to fight the zombies of which she is part., This resonates with the character of Needy in *Jennifer's Body*, discussed in the previous chapter. The theme of incorporating aspects of the monster, or demon as the threat is an integral part of the creation of the Surviving Woman in contemporary horror. It is only through opening the body to the threat that the Surviving Woman can hope to defeat it.

Alice is another representative of the development of the Kick-Ass Babe. Like Buffy, Alice is represented as a figure to be looked at but this hides her inner strength.. Also like Buffy, she is again not entirely human. From the first *Resident Evil* (2002) onwards, Alice has no memory of who she is. *Resident Evil* is an action-horror film hybrid that combines big budget fight scenes and special effects with zombies and monstrous creatures. As the film progresses and she becomes trapped in an underground facility with infected, monstrous creatures and a homicidal supercomputer and begins to remember who she is, she is an agent for those who created the virus that created the monsters. She becomes infected over the course of this first film, but does not yet become monstrous. Instead, the infection has given her strength, speed, mental powers and it makes her almost unbeatable. These two characters, Buffy and Alice, demonstrate the tension these narratives harbour between monstrous and superhuman. This tension resolves itself through aligning them with the superhuman because of the texts' dual position as both action and horror.

Although Xena, of the television series *Xena: Warrior Princess*, is not a cross genre character, purely inhabiting the action genre, her depiction has helped the evolution of the female hero. I have included her in this study because she represents a female heroism that has influenced the development of characters like Buffy and furthers ideas about maternal heroism that were begun by the character of Ripley. "Although Xena lives in a mythical universe, how she is depicted suggests a great deal about actual women and their changing relationship to the heroic, tough roles that had been assumed by men."[454] Xena is interesting because as a hero "she initially rejects romance- the traditional motivation for a female character- for an exploration, healing, and development of self."[455] Moreover she highlights the importance of female friendship and support. *Xena* the series resists the standard form of pitting women against each other in favour of a care between and for each other.[456] This has been continued in *Buffy* and both shows highlight how a female hero approaches heroism if she wishes to succeed.

Xena also highlights the importance of female-centred spheres of influence. "Xena's mission tends towards the defence of domestic, female-centred institutions and goals, the home and community-spheres where women traditionally played a prominent role."[457] Within the horror film it is often these domestic spheres that are under attack. The Surviving Woman is often the one who must restore the order of this sphere, to make it safe and to protect those that reside within that are not as strong as her. Maternal power is foregrounded in *Xena*: "The Furies emphasize the importance of the maternal blood tie as the closest human connection, essential to all others, to the family, the clan, the community as a whole," this is opposed to Apollo who believes in the man as the only life source and the woman a mere container for the gestation of the man's child.[458] *Xena* plays out themes first developed with the characters of Ripley and Sarah Connor, that maternal toughness and the domestic sphere is not weak but a different reason to wield violence.

[454] S. A. Inness, *Tough Girls: Women Warriors and Wonder Women in Popular Culture* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania UP, 1999), 163.
[455] J. K. Stuller, *Ink-Stained Amazons and Cinematic Warriors: Superwomen in Modern Mythology* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2010), 72.
[456] Ibid.
[457] A. Futrell, "The Baby, the Mother, and the Empire: Xena as Ancient Hero" in *Athena's Daughters: Television's New Women Warriors*, ed. F. Early and K. Kennedy (New York: Syracuse UP, 2003), 14.
[458] Ibid., 19.

Female heroism differs from male heroism in a number of ways, notably in her ability to accept help from others. Female heroes dispatched with the male hero model of isolated heroism. As Stuller writes, the motivation of love and compassion that these female heroes use is "a break from the 'Lone Wolf' model of heroism which is rooted in traditional uber-masculinity and isolationism."[459] The traditional hero is alone, aloof from the society that he protects, an outsider, his heroism is depicted in his ability to survive alone and save the world without relying on anyone. Female heroism, on the other hand, is based on cooperation, talking, communicating with others and coming up with the best approach through this way. For Stuller, "[c]ollaborations with friends, family, or community is common to the female hero – not because she is incapable of succeeding on her own, but because she is more successful when she recognises, encourages, and utilizes the talents of others;"[460] collaboration is a strength. Being open to help stops the female hero from being outnumbered, and it stops her from closing herself to change. Buffy "is most vulnerable when she isolates herself from the group,"[461] and needs her friends' support. They affect how Buffy enacts being a slayer. The series emphasises that most of the slayers, prior to Buffy, operated alone and this contributed to their early deaths. As the vampire Spike says, "a slayer with friends and family, that wasn't in the brochure." Buffy's friends provide her with an unknown factor the other slayers lacked, and they provide an alternative to the nuclear family. These women "reject patriarchal systems of behaviour in favour of lived knowledge: experience, gut feelings, friendship, and context-based decision-making."[462] They represent a particularly feminine approach to heroism and one that challenges predefined ideas of what constitutes the heroic. Buffy also subverts traditional theories of what constitutes the heroic through speech.

As Heinecken writes, "the typical hero is enigmatic and silent. Because speech suggests incompleteness and a need to be in relation to another, silence is a way of keeping the body impenetrable, of policing physical boundaries."[463] In that model, speech, communication with others are signs of weakness for the traditional male hero. Irigaray argues that women

[459] J. K. Stuller, *Ink-Stained Amazons and Cinematic Warriors: Superwomen in Modern Mythology* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2010), 87.
[460] Ibid., 92.
[461] B. Wall and M. Zyrd, "Vampire Dialectics: Knowledge, institutions and labour" in *Reading the Vampire Slayer*, ed. R. Kaveney (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2002), 60.
[462] J. K. Stuller, *Ink-Stained Amazons and Cinematic Warriors: Superwomen in Modern Mythology* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2010), 92.
[463] D. Heinecken. *The Warrior Women of Television* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2003), 31.

remain socially inferior because they do "not have access to language, except through recourse to 'masculine' systems of representation."[464] Within the discourse of the traditional action text speech is not the province of men but of women. For Buffy the speech act is an act of heroism, for she collaborates through conversation with her friends and this in turn provides the best solution to dealing with whatever demonic force is trying to destroy the world. The way Buffy and her inner circle use language is a sign of their value to each other, for "while they are not literally related, there is good evidence to suggest that they see each other as family."[465] This is seen in the way they speak the same, almost as if it is another dialect or a code. Language can also be seen as a sign of inclusion in that Buffy's very distinctive use of the English language. For example, Buffy has a habit of adding the letter 'O' to the end of words, such as "Destructo-girl"[466] or "no kick-o, no fight-o."[467] In season seven of the show a new character starts speaking like Buffy, leading her to alerting him to the fact he is starting to sound like her. Her distinctive use of language is a sign of her significance within the universe and the connections she has forged with others. Within *Buffy "*language acts as a crucial element…especially as a group-building force."[468] A Language is not exclusionary as Buffy wields it as a sign of her communal heroism, in which everyone is able to speak, communicate and be heard. As discussed, the use of language in *Buffy* is a key change in the different way heroism is displayed in the female hero centred text. The use of language to create a group of comrades who help each other and who contribute to the safety of the world shows a communal type of heroism that is absent from most stories centred on a male hero.

Buffy follows on from *Xena* in that both these series highlight a communal sense of heroism. Xena was an unusual character as her friendship with Gabrielle was a large aspect of the show. "*Xena* shows that toughness in women does not have to be antithetical to friendship,"[469] highlighting how bonds can actually make a better hero. Xena and Gabrielle

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[464] L. Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One*, trans. C. Porter and C. Burke (New York: Cornell UP, 1985), 85.
[465] S. Mandala, "Solidarity and the Scoobies: an analysis of the y-suffix in the television series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer," Language and Literature,* 16, no. 1 (2007), 59.
[466] J. Whedon, "The Witch," *Buffy The Vampire Slayer*, Season 1, Ep. 3, directed by Stephen Cragg, aired17 March, 1997. (California: Mutant Enemy, 1999) DVD.
[467] J. Whedon, "What's My Line: Part Two," *Buffy The Vampire Slayer*, Season 2, Ep. 10, directed by David Semel, aired 24 November, 1997. (California: Mutant Enemy, 1999) DVD.
[468] L. Medendorp, "*Buffy*speak: The internal and external impact of Slayer Slang" in *Fan Phenomena: Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, ed. J. K. Stuller (Chicago: Intellect Books, 2013), 69.
[469] S. A. Inness, *Tough Girls: Women Warriors and Wonder Women in Popular Culture* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania UP, 1999), 168.

learn from each other, they do not remain static because they refuse to form relationships with others. Like Buffy and her best friend, Willow, relationships for these heroes "encourage each other to push the limits of what it means to be a hero, emphasizing the importance of flexibility."[470] These connections emphasize a unique female aspect of heroism. This can also be seen in *Scream* where Sidney does not operate alone, but has a small group of close friends who help provide her with information she needs in order to survive. Randy, her film nerd friend, provides her with knowledge of the rules of the horror genre. This enables Sidney to learn what she must do in order to play along with, or actively rebel against, whoever is wearing the ghost face mask. Sidney's heroism alters the notion of the lone hero, the person who works independently and has no need for support. Sidney survives with Gale, the actions of both these women contribute to the demise of Ghostface each time. This does not diminish their heroism, but adds a different dimension to its meaning. The concept of the Final Girl becomes even more inadequate in these examples because of Clover's insistence on an association between the survival of the Final Girl and her ability to inhabit the masculine position, isolated from others.[471] "*Xena* and *Buffy* demonstrate that many women can be tough and heroic when women come together in a supportive community,"[472] isolation does not help the hero in these female centred texts but the way in which Buffy and Xena enact their heroism also opens up a space for their community to be heroic as well. The male hero does not change with the world around him, he is complete unto himself. He stands separate from the world he protects so therefore he does not need to bend, change or alter to influences or other bodies around him. Buffy knows something the male hero does not though, that the world is too dark to be alone in and to fight alone can mean permanent death (Buffy has died several times on the show but is brought back by her friends) and the end of the hero's story.

Also these stories of close relationships between women work against the standard depiction of women being in competition with each other. "Traditionally…love among women has been a matter of rivalry,"[473] but Buffy and Xena represent the absence of this rivalry. *Xena*

[470] S. Ross, "'Tough Enough': Female Friendship and Heroism in *Xena* and *Buffy*" in *Action Chicks: New Images of Tough Women in Popular Culture*, ed. S. A. Inness (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 231.
[471] C.J. Clover. *Men, Women and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film.* (New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1993), 40.
[472] S. Ross, "'Tough Enough': Female Friendship and Heroism in *Xena* and *Buffy*" in *Action Chicks: New Images of Tough Women in Popular Culture*, ed. S. A. Inness (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 232.
[473] L. Irigaray, *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, trans. C. Burke and G. C. Gill (New York: Cornell UP, 1993), 103.

the series becomes a radical text in that it presents a friendship between women that is based in respect, awe and a care for each other.[474] Buffy and her friends continue this aspect of female heroism. *Buffy* highlights the importance of relationships and how "compassionate collaboration leads to a realization of potential in the self and others."[475] Luce Irigaray sees how women interact with each other within society as an imposed sense of keeping each other down and that women speak to each other in a way that prevents them from knowing themselves. Women place judgements on each other, and this "prevents the woman from standing out from an undifferentiated grouping."[476] There is an absence of competition between women within these texts, both Buffy and Xena help and encourage their companions in the quest for their own identity as their companions help them in turn to know themselves better. These superwomen subvert traditional notions of what constitutes the feminine and the relationship between women. They signify a drastic re-writing of not only heroism but of the importance of the relationships between women and opens up an area for the development of this. Buffy and Xena both go against the standard in that they do not "destroy anything that emerges from their undifferentiated condition" and as such are not "agents of their own annihilation."[477]

Although Buffy's power is well above that of her other friends, she does not become a female monster. "Buffy's character as a woman warrior and hero is counterpoised not only against males but also against nonconformist females whose rebellions are located outside the bonds of just warriorism as enacted by Buffy."[478] This view describes another slayer, Faith, an example of the monstrous female who thrives on excess. Faith is isolated, lacking friends and family and she also resents Buffy's responsibility. Faith becomes monstrous when she changes sides in the fight against evil after killing an innocent. Buffy does not follow the same path because, unlike Faith, she is aware that her body is not just a strong tool for taking what she wants. What stops Buffy from becoming monstrous is that her understanding of the world and how she operates morally and ethically is connected to the idea that "the body of the hero is not discreet but connected to and formed in relation to the bodies of others."[479] A

[474] J. K. Stuller, *Ink-Stained Amazons and Cinematic Warriors: Superwomen in Modern Mythology* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2010), 72.
[475] Ibid., 103.
[476] L. Irigaray, *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, trans. C. Burke and G. C. Gill (New York: Cornell UP, 1993), 103.
[477] Ibid., 103-104.
[478] F. Early, "The Female Just Warrior Reimagined: From Boudicca to Buffy" in *Athena's Daughters: Television's New Women Warriors*, ed. F. Early and K. Kennedy (New York: Syracuse UP, 2003), 60.
[479] D. Heinecken. *The Warrior Women of Television* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2003), 92.

telling exchange between Buffy and Faith occurs in the episode "Consequences." Faith, while trying to excuse her stabbing of an innocent, says to Buffy that people need them to survive so that in the balance "nobody's gonna cry over some random bystander who got caught in the crossfire." Buffy responds that she will care. Buffy's potential for monstrosity, as depicted in the character of Faith, is counteracted by her essential goodness and care for the world. The monstrous-feminine has been redefined in the hero narrative of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* as something that develops from an abuse of power and a lack of care for the world. The monstrous woman is developed when she lacks an ethics of care and a knowledge of the power she wields. Buffy may be the world's saviour but she does not see this as an excuse for the abuse of power. Buffy does spill blood of a non-demon variety, however, this is not done with a glee or a joy like Faith's crimes, and this comes about when she has no other options. Faith has poisoned Buffy's lover, Angel, as Faith is responsible for his illness and the only way to save him is the blood of a slayer. Thus Ross claims that "Buffy is flexible enough to attempt actions (killing) that she would not under other circumstances."[480] For Buffy killing is not something that she chooses on her own. She discusses her options with those around her and in this instance this is the only course of action that she is left with. Like the Surviving Woman who kills in order to ease suffering, the female hero only kills when it is her last course of action. Female heroes do not operate in isolation and therefore they are constantly aware that what they do affects others and that the actions of others affect them in turn. Buffy's deaths also help her continue her communal approach to heroism.

Buffy, as the eternal Surviving Woman, saves the world many times only through communication and listening. In the traditional sense of heroism, the hero is always male: "The hero displays his worthiness, his uniqueness, by having a particularly pure spirit and strong mind that allows him to control his unruly body,"[481] his body is merely a tool, used for carrying out his heroic deeds but separate from who he was. He is on a higher plane, striving for pure mind and spirit. The female hero on the other hand is integrated with her body, it is her and she is it, this links her to the abject and the monsters that she is killing. "Women don't automatically approach the journey of the female hero better or worse than men do simply because they are women. But they may approach it differently, perhaps even more authentically, because of the unique and specific experiences women encounter because they

[480] S. Ross, "'Tough Enough': Female Friendship and Heroism in *Xena* and *Buffy*" in *Action Chicks: New Images of Tough Women in Popular Culture*, ed. S. A. Inness (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 240.
[481] D. Heinecken. *The Warrior Women of Television* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2003), 138.

are women."[482] Female heroism does not mean that that they merely become like their male counterparts. Like Pat Gill's ethics of care, which she sees as the true reason for the success of the hero in horror, this is how female heroism differs from male heroism.[483]

Theresa Rizzo writes that though the *Alien* series is linear in narrative it is also a story that focuses on "processual bodies that are in a constant dynamic of exchange with other bodies."[484] Each connection and each exchange, both physically and mentally, that the heroes within these narratives encounter expand their understanding of what they are and what they can achieve. This is why Ripley, as well as Buffy and Alice, survive where others do not, for they are not closed bodies that refuse to bend or adapt with their surroundings. This is also why the action/horror hybrid films require a female hero who approaches heroism differently. This is the same reason why horror requires a female hero, because they are not closed off to the possibility of change, of fusions between themselves and others. The male hero does not alter much between the start of a film to the end, he may have slightly more bruises but his general make up, his personality, attitude and understanding of himself, has not altered. On the other hand, Alice from *Resident Evil* has an unstable genetic make-up. She has the T-virus bonded to her, and then she is cured from it, by the Umbrella Corporation, as a way to weaken her. She changes on a cellular level multiple times over the course of the film and is, therefore, in a constant state of becoming, like Ripley. This is a marked difference between how female heroes and male heroes are constructed. Male heroes are closed texts, they start as tough, strong independent men, and they end the same. Female heroes on the other hand are in a constant state of flux and conversation with their surrounds. This alters the way in which they enact their heroism. They recognise that heroism comes from being adaptable like the world around them.

They are also aware that they contain some of the darkness that they fight within them. Heinecken writes that "an important evolution in Buffy's character has been her increasing awareness that the powers of the slayer are rooted in darkness."[485] This aspect of her character makes her a better slayer but it is her awareness that some of her power is steeped

[482] J. K. Stuller, *Ink-Stained Amazons and Cinematic Warriors: Superwomen in Modern Mythology* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2010), 155.
[483] P. Gill, "The Monstrous Years: Teens, Slasher Films, and the Family," *Journal of Film and Video 54*, no. 4 (2002).
[484] T. Rizzo. *Deleuze and Film: A Feminist Introduction*. (London: Continuum, 2012), 108.
[485] D. Heinecken. *The Warrior Women of Television* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2003), 120.

in darkness that allows her to continue functioning as a hero. A successful female hero, especially one whose power is tied to the very thing she fights, is saved by her acknowledgement of her responsibility and care for others.[486] As female heroes are grounded in their bodies, unlike male heroes, they are aware that they are constantly in fluctuation. They know "the power that one possesses alters, changing or moving depending on one's position relative to others,"[487]and that, they as part of the world, continue to grow and change as they are forever in a state of altering worlds.

As we have seen, the female heroes of the action and horror genres inhabit very different worlds. One inhabits, on the commercial level, bigger budgets and on the narrative level large explosions, world in peril and occasionally superpowers. The other generally dwells in the world of minimal budgets, monsters, blood, death and a very human power. These two types of female heroes live in very differing worlds but they are connected through their transgression. They are female heroes, women doing what is the traditional province of men, rescuing people and saving the world. They both risk their lives for the greater good and owe a debt to each other. They also inform each other. The horror films shift the focus from the killer to the survivor as the focal point of the film has occurred since the 1970s and 1980s, becoming more marked in the 1990s with *Scream* and its subsequent slasher revival. This shift could be linked to the impact of action film and television series in which the hero is the fixed element that is faced with an ever-changing cast of villains. The connection between them highlights how representations of women on screen have altered and how women are capable of displaying heroic traits without recourse to the masculine.

Horror has featured the heroine since the early period of monster movies like the *Phantom of the Opera* in the 1920s and 1930s. The heroine was often depicted running and screaming in terror as the monster chases her and any male character who might occupy the role of rescuer is usually otherwise occupied or unconscious somewhere. The heroine never confronted the monster in a violent manner; rather she traditionally would look upon his true visage, scream and then the monster would meet his fate by some other means. As the heroine has transitioned into the Final Girl and then to the Surviving Woman, her passivity has given way to a more stand and fight mentality. She attacks and flees, she runs, screams and fights. The

[486] Ibid., 125.
[487] Ibid., 122.

female hero's journey to full active participation in her own survival is a gradual development. Significantly her journey is aided by developments in the action genre.

At the end of season five of the television series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer,* the title character, Buffy, throws herself off a makeshift tower in order to save her sister and the world. At the end of *The Descent Part 2,* Sarah trapped once again in the caves risks her life in order to save the deputy sheriff, so she can live to be with her child. She does this by drawing the bat people to her by screaming as they are drawn to noise and movement. These two examples show how regardless of the genre, the texts depict female heroism. The genre is secondary to the actions shown within the films, for Buffy and Sarah both sacrifice themselves for others. The deaths of these women is not tied to the eradication of the monstrous feminine, nor is it tied to the removal to the active heroism. "They did not simply fall victim to a misogyny that interprets women's aggressiveness as criminality to be punished."[488] Their sacrifice is not forced on them, they choose to it for the good of the world in which they live.

These examples also show how the two genres have influenced each other over the decades. Just as Ripley was an amalgam of the action hero and of the Final Girl, so do a lot of surviving women have a touch of Buffy in them. The Surviving Woman cares about the world, she attempts to save people when she can, she feels compassion and sympathy and she risks herself to end a threat to other lives. They also depict how female violence is different from male violence: "[f]emale violence is purposeful violence, rather than just an expression of strong emotions or a need for individual power."[489] As the previous chapter explored, violence can be seen as abjection, corrupting but also useful. However, if not controlled or directed it can also be abused. Female violence within *Alien, Buffy* and *Resident Evil* is controlled by an empathetic connection to the world. The heroes of these series all are guided by a need to protect the world.

Like the Surviving Woman these border characters are in a state of becoming. The *Alien* series, and by extension the *Resident Evil* series, "present the idea of fixed and stable identities as undesirable, constraining and dangerously unproductive."[490] Rizzo asserts that

[488] S. Crosby, "The Cruelest Season: Female Heroes Snapped Into Sacrificial Heroines" in *Action Chicks: New Images of Tough Women in Popular Culture*, ed. S. A. Inness (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 153.
[489] D. Heinecken. *The Warrior Women of Television* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2003), 111.
[490] T. Rizzo. *Deleuze and Film: A Feminist Introduction*. (London: Continuum, 2012), 107.

"[i]n the *Alien* series identity and subjectivity are tied to the body; and bodies in these films are mutable and open to change."[491] The female heroes in both *Alien* and *Resident Evil* are never fixed within their bodies, rather they are always changing, developing, strengthening and weakening depending on what they need to survive. Heinecken notes that "[i]n the fourth film in the *Alien* series, her body, killed in the third film, is reproduced against her will by scientist. Her new body contains the DNA of the alien."[492] Ripley is no longer definable as human by this point in the series, but this does not result in her being turned into the monster, rather difference is almost lauded within these films as the essence of survival. This fluidity of bodies is tied to the influence of the horror genre which places the importance of the body at the centre of the narrative. A body in motion, a body open to change is crucial to being able to confront and defeat the monstrous. The characters killed early in this film represent stasis. Change is the impetus for survival and thriving. Ripley, Buffy and Alice all represent the process of becoming, for if they were to deny this openness they would be unable to survive the world they inhabit.

These heroes are connected to the surviving women of horror. They operate in a world where death is particularly present and in which they act through their bodies. Buffy, Ripley and Alice all hold the key to immortality in their characters. But bodies that remain immortal are "feminized bodies; they are opened, threatened, penetrated, and still they survive – in fact they *thrive.*"[493] Like the Surviving Woman their body is their weapon, and just like Connie forces her arm down the throat of the killer, Buffy repeatedly sticks her fingers and hands through the flesh of some demon. Ripley in *Alien Resurrection* swims in the bodies of the alien creatures as they take her to their queen. These bodies show that those touched by the abject are not destined for corporeal disintegration. Instead if one remains open, fluid and adaptable, these encounters enhance the likelihood of survival. Ripley wades and is immersed in a myriad of fluids over the course of the *Alien* series. Her contamination by the alien creatures is gradual and completed only in the final instalment of the series, *Alien Resurrection* (1997). If the male hero's heroism rests on his ability to keep and control his body, then the opposite can be said of female heroes, particularly those who occupy two genres.

[491] Ibid.
[492] D. Heinecken. *The Warrior Women of Television* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2003), 135.
[493] Ibid., 149.

Bodily control is the order of the day for the male action hero; he is the walking embodiment of the "clean and proper body" posited in Kristevan theory. The willingness of the female hero to open herself up to contamination is essentially where she departs from the male hero. Her body already is contaminated, since as a female body it already defies the rules of the clean and proper. As discussed earlier, pregnancy and menstruation mean that women are closely linked to the abject and their bodies are perceived as unstable, prone to leaking, bleeding and fluctuating more than a male body. Also as Buffy shows death can be a gift, a statement that would not seem to fit with traditional masculine heroism. In the final episode of season five, Buffy figures out that an earlier cryptic message that death is her gift actually meant that her death will save the world. This can be read as a reflection of "the tough female hero's transformation into sacrificial heroine endorsed patriarchal oppression."[494] However death is not permanent. Because the female hero is opened up to all the possibilities of life, death does not mean the end. Fluids and blurred boundaries are not alien to the female hero; she lives and breathes it as an essential part of her. These heroes show is that "the boundaries of humans and other life-forms are not fixed."[495] They remove themselves from traditional binaries and create new possibilities outside male/female and masculine/feminine binaries. By highlighting different ways to enact heroism the association between male and hero is fractured, and the clear boundaries between what constitutes the human and non-human help redefine heroism.

Even before her incorporation of the alien into herself, Ripley was "the only person tough enough to destroy the deadly creatures."[496] As the series progresses she becomes even tougher, however, after her death her position as human hero is somewhat altered. It is at this point that Ripley moves from a character with her roots in horror but her feet in action, and in this way she becomes a Surviving Woman. She is no longer Ripley but a clone. Her being defies human/non-human. Ripley is not a monster; her body is contaminated by the alien but this has just made her a better weapon to fight them. Rizzo writes: "[s]he is an amalgamation of human, alien and technology and has inherited the memories and traits of both Ripley and the alien queen."[497] Ripley has become a truly liminal character – she is "both promise and

[494] S. Crosby, "The Cruelest Season: Female Heroes Snapped Into Sacrificial Heroines" in *Action Chicks: New Images of Tough Women in Popular Culture*, ed. S. A. Inness (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 176.
[495] A. Powell, *Deleuze and Horror Film* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2005), 67.
[496] S. A. Inness, *Tough Girls: Women Warriors and Wonder Women in Popular Culture* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania UP, 1999), 11.
[497] T. Rizzo. *Deleuze and Film: A Feminist Introduction*. (London: Continuum, 2012), 108.

threat, the woman who saved humanity from the aliens and the woman through who they have entered the world again."[498] Liminal nature does not make her monstrous but rather adds to her ability to survive and save humanity once again. *Alien Resurrection* also points out the distrustful nature of the "human." Ripley is not entirely human, nor is Call, an android, who sees the danger of Ripley and tries to kill her. Instead they combine to destroy the military organisation trying to weaponize the alien. The heroes of this film are not human but are still ethically and morally more human than the military. This aspect of the *Alien* series points to the same issue that the Surviving Woman has had with authority figures in recent years, they cannot be trusted and are in fact the most abject of all.

The body is as significant for these female heroes as it is for the Surviving Woman of horror. As discussed, "Buffy's body is wedded to her sense of self and is always relevant to the action at hand,"[499] but she is also tied to a long line of heroic women who died in order. She presents a heritage of female heroism that has been erased from history, a history of the female body within horror. If her first incarnation was the blonde who inevitably died, she also has her roots in the negligee-wearing heroine of the haunted house or monster movie, and she is finally an eternal Surviving Woman growing in strength with each life-threatening event she encounters.

Early and Kennedy argue that "[n]arratives tell us about the cultures in which they are produced and enable us to imagine our possibilities and to understand our limits."[500] The narratives of these heroic women tell us of female heroism's increased prominence. Female heroes highlight a different way of being in the world. They also highlight that ideas about fixed, binary oppositions are outdated and that opening up to possibilities of change and becoming could save the world. These women also highlight a connection between the action genre and the horror genre, one that has allowed female heroism to develop beyond the standard idea of handmaiden or isolated, exception to the rule. Horror films showed that women can save themselves. As Clover herself concedes in the documentary *American*

[498] R. Kaveney. *From Alien to The Matrix: Reading Science Fiction Film* (New York: I.B Tauris, 2005), 191-192.
[499] F. Early, "The Female Just Warrior Reimagined: From Boudicca to Buffy" in *Athena's Daughters: Television's New Women Warriors*, ed. F. Early and K. Kennedy (New York: Syracuse UP, 2003), 59.
[500] F. Early and K. Kennedy, "Introduction" in *Athena's Daughters: Television's New Women Warriors*, ed. F. Early and K. Kennedy (New York: Syracuse UP, 2003), x.

Nightmare, the Surviving Woman in horror "basically saves herself. One of the lessons of these films is don't try to save girls. Girls can save themselves."[501]

[501] *American Nightmare*, documentary, A. Simon (2001).

Chapter Five.
Women take centre stage:
The importance of emotion and the centrality of women.

"Women are the sex most in tune with the entrails of life"

-Erica Jong
What Do Women Want?

"It's good to get angry"

- Lorraine
Carjacked (2011).

This chapter will explore the relationship within contemporary horror films between women and their emotions, while highlighting the central position women hold in these films. This chapter will show that emotion is the key to enacting a particularly feminist type of heroism that is based on an ethics of care. It will also foreground the particularly violent responses the protagonists within these films enact. Moreover, the chapter will compare how emotional expression differs in the traditional slasher era and in the contemporary. Although none of the films discussed here could be considered wholly feminist, they do shine a light on the decline of misogyny within the horror narrative, as well as placing women in the position to save themselves, be their own heroes without male intervention through a command of their own bodies that is specifically female.

The heroic woman found in the action genre has often been seen as being limited by her role as mother. As discussed in the previous chapter however this can be seen not as a limitation, but as a way of enacting heroism differently. Within the contemporary horror film the once lone survivor, the Final Girl, is a mother, a sister, a friend and a partner. The Surviving Woman fights for and with others, but this does not limit her heroism, as it would a male hero. As we saw the male hero is often shown to be outside of relationships, outside of the community, he is not a figure that integrates himself with the people that he rescues. The male hero usually begins his journey alone, finds a cause worth fighting for and ends his

journey alone. The western genre is filled with examples of this figure. The lone male hero must deploy violence in order to protect those who cannot protect themselves but this violence also forces him to remain apart from those he saves. Abele asserts that "The hero is not only divided from the heroine, but from the community for which he risked so much."[502] The film *Shane* (1953), with its ending with the threat to his community being ended, is an example of this but the hero is exiled regardless of his role as hero because his violence also represents a threat. The lone male hero's isolation is the price he pays for his heroism. The female hero on the other hand is often part of a community, or becomes part of a community: she builds relationships and these relationships propel her to fight. The Surviving Woman is motivated by emotion, love and anger, both, and the expression of emotion is not seen as a weakness but as a strength.

As previously discussed, Clover's Final Girl usually displays no emotion other than fear. As Clover writes, she has no deep relationships with any of her friends and, as many other critics have noted, parents are usually absent within the traditional slasher film. Even when the Final Girl stands triumphant, it is often with a cool detachment, an exhausted collapse or, in some cases, catatonia. Her fight is not motivated by emotion, but rather by the primal instinct for survival. However, emotions, such as love or anger, are key to how the Surviving Woman operates in contemporary horror films. One of the important aspects of Clover's Final Girl is that "male viewers are quite prepared to identify not just with screen females, but with screen females in fear and pain."[503] Fear is one of the key characteristics of the Final Girl and it is often the only emotion that the audience sees the character experiencing. As discussed in previous chapters she is no longer isolated from those around her, but an integral part of her friendship group. She has relationships, both romantic and platonic, and she can also be seen as fulfilling a maternal role in some cases. The inclusion of emotion as a driving force in the Surviving Woman's choices and in the way she fights, points towards a feminist influence on the representation of this character on screen. The impact of second-wave feminism and the increasing voice of women's anger will be examined here as well, alongside with how an ethics of care demonstrates a difference in masculine and feminine approaches to moral issues and connectedness to the world.

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[502] E. Abele. *Home Front Heroes: The Rise of a New Hollywood Archetype, 1988-1999* (North Carolina: McFarland & Company, 2014), 15.
[503] C.J. Clover. *Men, Women and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film.* (New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1993), 5.

I will explore how film works on the principle of conjuring up emotions in the audience. As Noel Carroll writes, "affect is the glue that holds the audience's attention to the screen on a moment-to-moment basis."[504] The watching of horror is linked to tapping into emotions most people do not feel on a day-to-day basis. Horror incites emotions from within the text but is often a mirror for the "day-to-day anxieties that, if not directly experienced by members of the audience, resonated with them and were capable of inspiring strong emotion."[505] Monsters in horror film are ""not only fearsome, they are somehow unclean, reviling, and loathsome by their very nature."[506] As discussed in chapter two, they are sites of the abject who bring about chaos and let loose images of blood, guts and the corpse. Film works on the basis that it can induce the emotions that it wants the audience to feel through music, dialogue, narrative and the characters on screen. Clover posits that the audience of the slasher film is initially identified with the killer, but because the audience are "confronted with visual evidence of an individual's suffering, we have a strong tendency to empathise and sympathise with her."[507] As the audience begin to see more of the Final Girl, she also begins increasingly to wield the gaze, therefore inviting the audience to her point of view. She reveals the monstrousness of the killer and as such severs any identification the audience holds with him.[508] This shift is based on the wielding of the gaze and differs significantly from how connection with the Surviving woman is established.

However the audience's identification with the Surviving Woman is based partially on an emotional connection with her. Identification within film is a contentious issue as mentioned earlier in this thesis, but one way in which audiences identify with a character is through sharing their point of view. With the Surviving Woman, the audience are also encouraged to identify, and empathise, with her through the use of emotions. The Surviving Woman, in contrast to the Final Girl, experiences a wider range of emotions through her journey. The loss of her friends, partner and family is part of the material of her metamorphosis into a

[504] N. Carroll, "Film, Emotion and Genre" in *Philosophy of Film and Motion Pictures: An Anthology*, ed. N. Carroll and J. Choi (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 217.
[505] A. L. Grunske, *Educational Institutions in Horror Film* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2015), 12.
[506] N. Carroll, "Film, Emotion and Genre" in *Philosophy of Film and Motion Pictures: An Anthology*, ed. N. Carroll and J. Choi (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 228.
[507] B. Gaut, "Identification and Emotion in Narrative Cinema" in *Philosophy of Film and Motion Pictures: An Anthology*, ed. N. Carroll and J. Choi (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 266.
[508] C.J. Clover. *Men, Women and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film.* (New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1993), 45.

strong adversary of the killer. The audience does not just register fear, terror and disgust through the characters on screen but also grief, anger and triumph. The film elicits these responses from the audience through camera position, lighting, editing, use of colour, as well as acting and narrative.[509] As Clover states, the audience are with the Final Girl through her most extreme moments of fear and this draws the audience into sympathy with her.[510] The bond between the audience and the Final Girl is articulated through fear as well as anger and grief. Grief has developed as an emotion viewers witness the Surviving Woman experiencing as a prominent aspect of her character. The contemporary horror film foregrounds characters' experiences as part of the new realism that has been developing in horror since *Scream*. It features characters pausing to reflect over their losses as if it were really happening. The significance of emotion does not just affect the spectator but how the Surviving Woman conducts herself on screen.

The method to analysing how the emotions of compassion and love, those essential to the ethics of care, operate within horror films can be approached in two main ways. The first is through an Irigarayan lens, particularly the importance of relationships between women and how love can function between women and for women. The second approach to emotions and their function within horror and the character of the Surviving Woman follows on from that discussed in the previous chapter. This will further explore the aspects of love and family as a motivator for the Surviving Woman fighting against the killer.

As mentioned previously women in the role of hero operate on an ethics of care and love for the world. These two approaches, the Irigarayan focus and the textual analysis of the films, will be utilised in order to examine how love plays a part in the construction of the Surviving Woman. Anger is also a governing emotion of the Surviving Woman and will be explored in remakes of classic slasher films, as well as with reference to other contemporary horror films where the emotion is highlighted as being particularly important in the narrative.

Luce Irigaray writes that man is "secretly or obscurely, a slave to the power of the maternal feminine which he diminishes or destroys."[511] Within the horror film the killer turns the

[509] N. Carroll, "Film, Emotion and Genre" in *Philosophy of Film and Motion Pictures: An Anthology*, ed. N. Carroll and J. Choi (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 222.
[510] C.J. Clover. *Men, Women and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film.* (New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1993), 45-47.
[511] L. Irigaray, *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, trans., C. Burke and G. C. Gill (New York: Cornell UP, 1993), 10

maternal feminine into the monstrous feminine and he absorbs, or is absorbed, within her power and her destructive force. As Creed argues, "all human societies have a conception of the monstrous-feminine, of what it is about woman that is shocking, terrifying, horrific, abject."[512] Creed goes on to say that "the archaic mother is present in all horror films as the blackness of extinction –death,"[513] but the archaic mother is not necessarily seen within the films as a physical portrayal.

Within the film *Alien* the monstrous mother is present in the figure of the alien. As Creed writes, "her all-consuming, incorporating powers are concretized in the figure of her alien offspring."[514] A transference happens between the mother and the offspring, she gives birth to this creature as an agent of her own desire "to tear apart and reincorporate all life."[515] The killer within the slasher film works with a similar purpose. His intent, like that of the alien offspring, is to destroy those he encounters and bring forth the destructive aspects of the archaic mother, the idea of this figure as all-consuming abyss.[516] In his thirst for blood and death he destroys everything he encounters, he turns quiet suburbs or camping holidays into areas where the boundaries have dropped away and the abject can leech through. The only person who is immune to the destruction of the killer is the Surviving Woman because, as we saw in chapters two and four is connected to her openness to becoming.

The journey that the Surviving Woman goes through in this abject-laden nightmare is one of self-discovery. In order to become woman in her own right, and not just the 'Other' from which man establishes himself as the dominant one, woman "would have to re-envelop herself within herself, and do so at least twice: as woman and as a mother."[517] If the killer through his connection with the abject is linked to the monstrous-feminine, then when the Surviving Woman comes into contact with the killer she also comes into contact with the monstrous-feminine. The monstrous-feminine is related to the idea of the mother as self-generating, all-encompassing and the giver of life as well as the taker.[518] The Surviving Woman encounters the monstrous-feminine in the signifiers of the abject that the killer brings

[512] B. Creed, *The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis*. (New York: Routledge, 1993), 1.
[513] Ibid., 28.
[514] Ibid., 22.
[515] Ibid.
[516] Ibid., 17.
[517] Ibid., 11
[518] Ibid., 17.

forth. The Surviving Woman first envelops herself as woman when through her fight to survive she discovers her own strength, a strength previously untapped in her day to day life. Through this moment she becomes once over enveloped in the feminine, the feminine used in this context is related to the abject and its association with bodily fluids and the permeability of the female body. This is, of course, not the negative aspects of the abject as it is associated with chaos and monstrosity but the positive dimensions that allow for growth and change. As she fights she is confronted with the abject, often immersed in it and it is through this that she becomes re-enveloped, as mentioned the abject being associated most with the feminine and the maternal.

Renewal is key to the Surviving Woman, and she loses more of herself than the Final Girl. In her fight against the killer she loses hair, nails, blood and other pieces of herself. Irigaray writes that "there is in us an unending loss of what is old or already dead, both at the most physical level – hair, bones, blood, our whole body – and in our spiritual aspect – our character, our opinions, our desires, joys and pains, our fears."[519] As will be shown later in this chapter, moreover, the Surviving Woman does not just suffer physical loss but emotional and mental as well. These losses function as a source of renewal for the Surviving Woman who must become more than what she is in order to survive and defeat the killer. The first part of this quotation links to Kristeva's idea of the abject and the bodily wastes that we dispense until there is nothing but the corpse left but in the figure of the Surviving Woman loss and decay become transcendence and power.

Anna Powell examines the relationship between Ripley and the alien creatures in the last instalment of the *Alien* series. Ripley by this stage has become partly alien. Referring to the scene in which Ripley is carried by an alien drone, Powell writes, "the embrace in which the alien carries Ripley to the alien queen is both repellent and beautiful."[520] This scene depicts Ripley accepting her becoming, as she acknowledges the alien as part of her. This acceptance does not destroy Ripley, or make her an agent of the monstrous-feminine, nor does it lessen her role as Surviving Woman and hero within the text. Rather she accepts the changes in her nature and does not fix her identity as human or alien but as an amalgam. This recalls Halberstam's interpretation of the character of Sketch who emerges from the film neither as

[519] L. Irigaray, *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, trans., C. Burke and G. C. Gill (New York: Cornell UP, 1993), 28.
[520] A Powell, *Deleuze and Horror Film* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2005), 76.

male or female, but something new.[521] Ripley is no longer restricted by binary oppositions. The Surviving Woman must be open to renewal and transcendence. How she appears at the beginning of the film is not what the audience is left with at the closing. This is seen in the final instalment through Ripley's movements, particularly a scene in which she is swimming. The scene moves between the aliens swimming and Ripley and it heightens the viewer's awareness of the similarities between Ripley and the alien. Elsewhere there is a scene in which she strokes the face of another character using only three of her fingers, mimicking the hand shape of the alien. Such scenes are placed throughout the film as subtle indicators of Ripley's fusing with the alien. Her confrontation with the killer, and with the threat of death, causes her to stand up and shed the vestiges of what she once was in order to become what she is and what she will be.

In *While She Was Out,* Della is a weakened, abused housewife; but as she progresses through the film and kills her pursuers, one by one, she becomes a warrior. By the end of the film she is ready to stand up to her husband and to defend her children. Later she finds in her pockets a picture one of her children had drawn for her and this reminder of those who depend upon her surviving impels her to fight again. The significance of this moment is that it occurs at a time when Della is overwhelmed and frightened. The character of Della draws on ideas about the maternal protective instinct, one that "may empower the woman to protect her baby and other children from abuse or violence."[522] In the film this moment is the turning point, she is reminded of her interconnectedness with the world and she stops being scared and starts to take the fight to her attackers one by one.

In *P2,* Angela is a workaholic with an inability to say no. Her family see her as continually cancelling dinner plans, and works far too much to be of any consistent value in their lives. As the film progresses and she defeats the man holding her hostage in a parking garage he guards she emerges a new woman, a powerful woman and no longer someone who allows those around her to push her or make her feel guilty for putting herself first when she needs to. The film closes on her walking confidently down the street away from the parking garage. The implied reading of this ending is that she has been changed by the confrontation and will take her new-found power into the rest of her life. Earlier in the film when she was trying to

[521] J. Halberstam, *Skin Shows: Gothic Horror and the Technology of Monsters.* (North Carolina, Duke UP, 2006), 160.
[522] S. Ward and S. Hisley. *Maternal-Child Nursing Care* (Philadelphia: F. A. Davis, 2016), 632.

leave work to get to her family, she rushed and tried to carry everything she was asked to bring, including a Santa costume and a giant teddy bear. She was depicted as flustered and anxious to make sure she had everything and would be on time. This is then juxtaposed to her more casual walk from the parking garage at the end of the film. Even though she has just fought for her life and killed her assailant, she walks slowly and confidently from the garage, she is not in a rush or under pressure, she has evolved past the stress of her daily life. Even though the audience are not shown how she interacts with her family after the events of the film the closing scene indicates that she has a new approach to life and a new attitude that will affect the rest of her life. The Surviving Woman must be reborn through the course of the film, she must gain new physical attributes. Her strength must expand and her endurance enhanced but she must also renew her characteristics, or tap into those she has suppressed and that lie latent within her. Her connection to her emotions is crucial to this transformation. *P2* and *While She Was Out* highlight the importance of self-love for the creation of the Surviving Woman. This is particularly evident in the character of Della who has tried to protect her children from the brunt of her husband's aggressive nature by keeping them out of her husband's way and encouraging them not to aggravate him in anyway. With its closing shot of her aiming a gun at her husband the film suggests that her passivity has given way to a more active self-protection and protection of her children. The attack by the gang unleashes her protective maternal instincts and the anger they stirred is transferred onto the next threat facing her and her children.

Another film that taps into the importance of self-respect is *Hostel 2*. Again, this film focuses on the relationship between women. However, the significant aspect of the film is actually the portrayal of the Surviving Woman, Beth, as someone who violently reacts against male verbal abuse towards women. The climactic scene in this film is the castration of the main antagonist by Beth. The *Hostel* series is part of the torture porn genre and features victims as commodities brought off an auction site for the murder and torture by rich people. As noted earlier, Beth is rich in her own right and when given the option to buy her way out only if she kills someone she initially refuses. However, she does eventually fulfil the requirement when she kills and "castrates him after he violently responds to her successful bid on her freedom and his body by calling her 'cunt.'"[523] The use of this gendered, derogatory term is the trigger

[523] M. Wester, "Torture Porn and Uneasy Feminisms," *Quarterly Review of Film and Video*, 29, no. 5 (2012), 394.

for Beth's final blow as a similar term is the trigger for Angela's death blow in *P2*. Beth is shown earlier in the film reacting in a similar manner to the verbal abuse by another male character. This defence of women is unseen in traditional horror genres.

The world of *Hostel* is hierarchized and shows that "money and contract, and not genitalia, as the supreme sign of power."[524] It has been argued that the difference between the first and the second *Hostel* films is in their rendering of what happens after the climax. The first film centres on a group of male friends. The protagonist Paxton kills their assailants and then goes home. The second film however ends with Beth gaining her revenge on the woman, Axelle, who led them to their deaths. She does not just save herself and then attempt to return to normalcy. As mentioned above, people pay for the ability to kill other people. Unlike Beth, most of the people involved in this pay for the pleasure and experience of killing a person as opposed to gaining their freedom. It is detailed within the narrative of the film that most people involved in the bidding process are rich enough to feed their murderous desires and use this method as a way of avoiding the legal repercussions. The dynamics of the film therefore suggest that Beth not only paid for her freedom, but also for the right to kill Axelle. An argument for the construction of these two endings suggests "Paxton becomes physically disfigured and eventually slaughtered, Beth is mentally disfigured and slaughters; furthermore, given her place as an elite within the market, the rhetoric of the films suggests her monstrosity exists before her encounter with the torture club.[525] However, my argument would be to suggest that Beth's anger and feelings of betrayal require sating in order for justice to be served and for Beth to move on.

Irigaray has written that "[w]omen want to find themselves, discover themselves and their own identity,"[526] this is the journey that the Surviving Woman goes on over the course of the film. She finds herself. Out of the death and destruction caused by the killer, she emerges. She is made whole, complete but never closed off always ready to learn more, to be renewed. She learns to love herself for her own worth and it is through the extremes of the situation that she finds herself in, that this is possible. For Irigaray one of the requirements for love of the self for the female is "detachment from what is, from the situation in which woman has

[524] Ibid.
[525] Ibid., 398.
[526] L. Irigaray, *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, trans., C. Burke and G. C. Gill (New York: Cornell UP, 1993), 66.

traditionally been placed."[527] The presence of the killer within the Surviving Woman's life makes this possible. As soon as the killer appears he disrupts any normality or traditional situations and his disruption of the norm allows the female hero access to the world in which she discovers herself and her strength.

In many genres women are cut off from one another, their relationships superficial at best and easily broken. In the 2000s there has been a developing trend within contemporary horror that depicts the relationships between women as central to the narrative. Women have often been depicted in competition with each other and Irigaray perceives this as being detrimental to women and encourages:

> a culture in which women are able to reestablish relations with their mothers and relations with other women, or sisters, thus overcoming mutual hostility that persisted among women when they competed with each other to take the place as man's other.[528]

The relationship between women certainly is central to the plot of *The Descent.* Within this film a group of women take adventure holidays annually. The group goes spelunking, the night before they are shown drinking and talking, catching up with each other's lives and re-connecting after some time apart. The danger hiding in the cave is not just the monsters that lurk there but also the secrets that they hold, for example the affair that one of the characters had been carrying out with the main character's, Sarah's, husband.

The group of women share a love for each other, but as the Irigaray suggests, women are often placed in competition.[529] Over the course of the film secrets the women have held come to the surface. One of these is between the Surviving Woman, Sarah and her friend Juno. Prior to this trip, Sarah lost her husband and daughter in a car accident. Juno was having an affair with her husband and when this is revealed Sarah responds angrily. This film makes explicit the link "between infidelity and women's aggression [and] reproduces gendered notions of power struggles between women," but unlike other representations of infidelity the

[527] Ibid., 69.
[528] R. J. De Vries, *Becoming Two in Love: Kierkegard, Irigaray and the ethics of sexual difference* (Oregon: Pickwick, 2013), 34.
[529] L. Irigaray, *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, trans. C. Burke and G. C. Gill (New York: Cornell UP, 1993), 103-104.

"other" woman is blamed for the act.[530] The betrayal is worsened by other lies that Juno has told, but the action places these two women in the competitive space that Irigaray defines as maintaining the passive position of women within society because they are unable to form a community in which to gain support and a respected place in the world.[531]

The Woman, on the other hand, highlights the construction of a community of women. As mothers and daughters to each other they create a new family. As the family relate to the wild woman differently the cracks within what appears to be an average middle class family begin to show. The patriarch of the family is revealed to be a rapist, not only of the captive woman but of his own daughter who he has impregnated, as well as being an abusive husband. His son is made in his image, following his father but in an even more sadistic manner. The wife is shown as spineless and complicit in her husband's actions, something manifested in her death. She becomes literally spineless when the wild woman shatters her spine when she throws her to the ground with monumental force. The eldest daughter frees the wild woman and in turn the wild woman frees her from her abusive family. As the film closes it is revealed that a third daughter has been kept in the barn with the dogs, raised as one of them and she is rescued by the woman as well. She takes these three girls and creates a new version of a family, as mentioned at the beginning of this paragraph, one based not on biology but on an emotional connection. This connection may not necessarily be love in the traditional sense of the word, but one that is more honest than the blood connections the girls have felt before. The family formation is more comparable to a sisterhood of women coming together in order to survive, thrive and love without fear.

This can be interpreted as a horror film reimagining of the feminist concept of sisterhood which was envisioned as "a means for providing comfort, access to insight, and most importantly, empowerment."[532] The concept of sisterhood is created over a "commonality of purpose, connection, communication and community."[533] *The Woman* represents this

[530] L. Lazard, "'You'll Like This-It's Feminist': Representations of Strong Women in Horror Fiction," *Feminism and Psychology*, 19, no. 1 (2009), 134.
[531] L. Irigaray, *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, trans. C. Burke and G. C. Gill (New York: Cornell UP, 1993), 103-104.
[532] S. O. Weisser and J. Fleischner, "Introduction" in *Feminist Nightmares: Women at Odds,* eds. S. O. Weisser and J. Fleischner (New York: New York UP, 1994), 2.
[533] R. Klein and S. Hawthorne, "Reclaiming Sisterhood: Radical Feminism as an Antidote to Theoretical and Embodied Fragmentation of Women" in *Desperately Seeking Sisterhood: Still Challenging and Building*, eds., M. Ang-Lygate, C. Corrin and M. S. Henry (London: Taylor & Francis Ltd., 1997), 57.

definition of sisterhood through the eldest daughter and the wild woman coming together in order to destroy the corrupted members of the family in a commonality of purpose. The connection between these two characters is shown through a number of scenes, such as the scene in which the wild woman senses the daughter's pregnancy and touches her stomach. These scenes of understanding between these two characters can be read as communication. The scene in which the daughter releases the wild woman from her chains involves non-verbal communication between them as they both stop and look at each other. This scene shows the two coming to an understanding as the daughter knows that the destruction of most of her family is the result of her actions; the wild woman is looking for the acknowledgment and acceptance of this result. The community aspect of sisterhood is shown in the final scene where the group of women and girls walk towards the woods away from the death and destruction that has taken place in and around the family home. Through the figure of the wild woman, the young girls of the family find support and acceptance. It is also through the wild woman that the eldest daughter gains the ability to defy her father, and through this is empowered.

What this suggests is that women have become more and more central to horror films. *The Descent* has a largely female cast with men only featuring as husband and monster. *Silent Hill* is another film that is predominantly focused on women. Women feature as monsters, victims, protagonists and sidekicks in this film. This makes this film very unique as female characters cannot be relegated to background roles. It is also essentially a film about mothers and their children. Within horror narratives mothers dominate the screen as the source of evil in pregnancy narratives, or as the cause of evil. *Psycho* is a key example of this. However, in *Silent Hill* the image of the good mother is pitted against the image of the bad one. The bad mother figure is split between two characters. Christabella is the matriarch of the town who fashions herself in the image of the clean and proper woman, upholding and respecting the laws and restrictions of the town; the second bad mother figure is Dahlia, the now crazed woman of the town who was forced to sacrifice her own daughter at the behest of Christabella. Christabella orders the sacrifice of Dahlia's daughter because she was born out of wedlock and is perceived as a threat not only to the religious purity of society, but also as woman who is impure and therefore a portal for evil. Dahlia's daughter is burnt, like a witch or Joan of Arc. However, she does not die but rather is kept hidden within the township and tended to by nurses. The plot of *Silent Hill* is complex and its interaction with gender is

deeply embedded within this plot, so for the purposes of this study the importance of women in every aspect of the film is the key feature.

Just as Rizzo notes that the Final Girl's "femininity is qualitatively different from that of her girlfriends,"[534] *Silent Hill* focuses on the different ways women operate in the world as sisters, mothers, daughters and friends. This make *Silent Hill* unique, and it highlights how women in film cannot just be classified as masculine or feminine, for they occupy a range of degrees between these two binaries and may not occupy either. The killer strives for what he can never have, he wants to be at one with the mother again, he needs "the mother or her substitute, the other suffices within herself to be two, being mother and woman."[535] Following Hélène Cixous' assertions, women do not need to strive for the mother as they hold the figure of the mother within themselves: "there is hidden and always ready in woman the source: the locus of the other."[536] This might help explain why the female hero survives and defeats the killer because she already has within her what he can never gain and that is a connection to the feminine. The role of women as monster figure in contemporary horror will be examined later in the chapter through discussing the power of anger within the figure of the Surviving Woman. The monstrous-feminine cannot grab hold of the female hero as it does the killer, unless she chooses to she does not act for the monstrous-feminine. Even when she does become a killer herself she may constitute a different monstrous-feminine from the one that the male killer acts with/for.

The second approach to analysing the role of love within the horror film and how it plays an important part in the creation of the Surviving Woman is through a focus on the figure of the Superwoman. This is also where an ethics of care can be seen within the construction of the Surviving Woman. As shown earlier, an ethics of care relates to the interconnectedness of people within the world and the relationships that they form impact their moral decisions.[537] In contrast to the impartial, objective deployment of moral rules, a feminist ethics of care recognises that "our moral lives aren't lived in the rarefied space of abstract principles, but

[534] T. Rizzo. *Deleuze and Film: A Feminist Introduction*. (London: Continuum, 2012), 93.
[535] L. Irigaray, *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, trans., C. Burke and G. C. Gill (New York: Cornell UP, 1993), 167.
[536] H. Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa," trans. K. Cohen and P. Cohen, *Signs: Journal of women in culture and society,"* 1, no. 4 (1976), 881.
[537] J. H. Kupfer. *Feminist Ethics in Film: Reconfiguring Care Through Cinema* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2012), 2.

right here on the ground, where things get messy and complex and concrete relationships matter."[538]

The ethics of care the Surviving Woman displays can be seen in *The Hunger Games* trilogy (2012-2015). Katniss Everdeen, the hero of these films, displays great compassion and concern for the well-being of others. In fact many of Katniss' decisions within *The Hunger Games* are based on her personal connection to those around her. The use of violence may seem antithetical to this care-based ethics, but if violence is enacted for the protection of someone you care for then it is justified.[539] Katniss' actions lead to a revolution that is bloody and violent but this is done to create a future world that is more caring and concerned for all than the current one they live in. This ethics of care can also be found in the movies and television shows discussed in chapter three.

Significantly women in hero narratives are seen as enacting their heroism in a communal way. The television series *Xena Warrior Princess* and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* "demonstrate the viability of female bonding as a site of unorthodox modes of communication and action, particularly when women talk with other women."[540] Relationships between women are seen as central to the narrative structures of these shows. The friendships are considered central to the plot as the monster of the week. These "bonds between women are represented as a source of toughness; they provide the strength needed to resist oppression and effect change."[541] Like Katniss, Buffy and Xena demonstrate a care for the world through their individual relationships, and their heroic decisions are motivated by the people that they love and care for. As mentioned in chapter three this is indicative of the different way that women enact heroism, but it also signifies the importance of love and emotion within these narratives.

Stuller writes that the superwomen that appear on screen "are compelled by their values, which are in turn reinforced by love," and goes on to say that "these superwomen illustrate a new form of heroism for popular culture that is based on loving compassion, and compassion

[538] L. I. Averill, "Sometimes the world is hungry for people who care: Katniss and a feminist ethics of care," *The Hunger Games and Philosophy* (New Jersey: John Wiley and Sons, 2012), 168.
[539] Ibid., 175.
[540] S. Ross, "'Tough Enough': Female Friendship and Heroism in *Xena* and *Buffy*" in *Action Chicks: New Images of Tough Women in Popular Culture*, ed. S. A. Inness (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 233.
[541] Ibid., 245.

itself is a heroic act."[542] Buffy as the eternal Surviving Woman who has emerged as a combination of superwoman and the female victim of the horror film, is an ambassador for how important love is in the representation of the Surviving Woman. She does not fight alone and she subverts the stereotypical "lone wolf" type of heroism. It is not just that Buffy fights alongside others, it is that her love for those she fights with, and also for is the real motive for her actions. In *Scream*, as mentioned in chapter one, Sidney does not fight alone and survives the film with Dewey and Gale. The focus on the relationships developed throughout the film series is reiterated so that with each addition to the series the relationship between the three of these characters becomes more intertwined. Gale and Sidney, in particular, help each other to best the killer. They trust each other, as is evident in the film's fourth instalment when Gale distracts the killer in order for Sidney to sneak up on them. The respect and reluctant love that develops between these two women indicates the changes in the representation of the Surviving Woman as part of a community against the Final Girl as lone survivor who holds herself apart from other women.

Love is related to gentleness and care, and is detrimental to women's claim on heroism. It is related to a way of explaining women's violence and their heroism, a way to justify women's shift from passive to active. The argument has been made that women need an excuse, a reason for violence, that the only way to rationalize women's violence is to make them a mother or a protector of the innocent. They are recouped by the traditional protective lioness image and made safe once more. New women heroes however show that this is not a negative thing, that acting violently for a specific cause is a way to re-imagine heroism. Martha Nussbaum argues that "emotions are suffused with intelligence and discernment"[543] and this view can be applied to the deployment of emotions as an important difference between female and male enactments of heroism. Women heroes are motivated by love and compassion, and through these emotions they form bonds with others, bonds which in turn enable them to achieve a greater level of heroism. As Stuller writes, "compassionate collaboration leads to a realization of potential in the self and others."[544] Heroism as it is enacted within *Buffy* also highlights the body as central. "*Buffy*'s morality and ethics are…based around an understanding that the body of the hero is not discreet but connected to

[542] J. K. Stuller, *Ink-Stained Amazons and Cinematic Warriors: Superwomen in Modern Mythology* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2010), 88.
[543] M. Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions* (New York: Cambridge UP, 2001), 1.
[544] J. K. Stuller, *Ink-Stained Amazons and Cinematic Warriors: Superwomen in Modern Mythology* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2010), 103.

and formed in relation to the body of others."[545] Like Katniss', Buffy's decisions are based on her bodily connection to the world.

She also demonstrates a morality that is based on her subjective feelings about individuals. This does not mean that she does not have a care for the world, but that her care for the world is centred on the individuals within it. Emotions as motivation and as a guide for morality could be interpreted as a form of self-serving heroism. But Nussbaum writes that "emotions are appraisals or value judgements, which ascribe to things and persons outside the person's control great importance to that person's own flourishing."[546] Read with reference to the characters of Katniss and Buffy, this view demonstrates they are aware that the people in the world are important to them and to their development. If they did not fight, and did not take on their heroic actions to keep those around them safe then they too would also perish. The importance of individuals to Buffy's enactment of heroism is emphasised in the episode "The Gift." This episode begins with a recap of the entire series to date, depicting not only the fights she has had over the years but also the relationships she has formed throughout. This not only structures the character of Buffy as a hero but also as a body living in the world, and this culminates in her sacrificing herself to save the world. This act is not generated by love of the world, but rather by her relationship with her sister. Her sister's blood is the key to closing a gateway to hell but Buffy realises her blood is the same as her sister's blood, and this provides Buffy with the key to saving her sister and the world. Her own blood can also close the gateway. This focus on interconnectedness contrasts with traditional constructions of heroism that focus on a central male figure. As has been mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, these often are exiled or outcast from those whom they protect. The male hero is an image of traditional rational morality in which objective decisions are vaunted above all else. The female hero is integrated with the world, and although she may still have super strength or different knowledge this does not set her apart. Rather, people learn from her as she learns from them.

In the case of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* the prominence of the importance of love and compassion in the construction of the new female hero is exemplified through the differences between Buffy and Faith, the other slayer featured in the series. Faith is without friends,

[545] D. Heinecken. *The Warrior Women of Television* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2003), 92.
[546] M. Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions* (New York: Cambridge UP, 2001), 4

without family and even without her mentor. She is alone in the world. As such Faith quickly falls within the role of villain. After murdering someone she attempts to frame Buffy for it. She has no love for anyone and any love she has experienced has not been reciprocated. Eventually Faith does find love and acceptance and comes to take on the role of hero once again, but the early stages of her character development highlight how the absence of love and compassion can create a villain. Buffy and Faith share the same power but the way they display this power, respectful of others and aloof, is the key to their enactment of heroism.

The character of Faith also brings about the negative aspects of this re-imagining of heroism. Sue Tjardes writes that with Faith being placed in a coma at the end of season 3 her "social and sexual transgressions are disciplined, and the creators' experiment concludes with the lesson that power of a slayer must be positioned within not just a code of warrior justice, but one of feminized responsibilities and restraint."[547] Tjardes highlights how a woman's power is restricted and Buffy's power derives from the fine line she walks, between responsibility and justice. An alternative reading of Faith's character and her subsequent punishment might be that she operated for her own pleasure and saw herself as above those she was meant to protect. Being apart from those she is meant to champion places Faith as a 'lone wolf' type of hero, outdated and is unhelpful in the construction of a uniquely woman hero.

Clearly, the woman's movement has impacted on the representation of women on screen. Clover asserts that "[o]ne of its main donations to horror…is the image of an angry woman-a woman so angry that she can be imagined as a credible perpetrator….of the kind of violence on which, in the low-mythic universe, the status of full protagonist rests."[548] This aspect of the Final Girl is not explored in detail by Clover. Clover's words quoted above are used to explain why the presence of a very active, sometimes very violent woman, on screen is not as threatening, or alien, as it was thought to be before the rise of the Final Girl. Significantly, this statement can be argued to hold within it a key characteristic of the Surviving Woman.

The Surviving Woman exhibits a large dose of anger directed at the killer, but also at the killer's sexism, sexual threats and violations. In *The Woman*, for instance both the wild

[547] S. Tjardes, "If You're Not Enjoying It, You're Doing Something Wrong," in *Athena's Daughters: Television's New Women Warriors*, ed. F. Early and K. Kennedy (New York: Syracuse UP, 2003), 74.
[548] C.J. Clover. *Men, Women and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film.* (New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1993), 17.

woman and the oldest daughter represent aspects of anger. The daughter has a quiet anger in her, but it is kept in check by the oppressive force of her father. For her part, the wild woman has a violent rage. Both these women have been the victims of the sexual abuse by a father. The daughter needs the wild woman in order to enact her longing to be free of her father and to gain her revenge for his abuse. However, just as love works on the basis of an ethics of care, so too does anger. As mentioned above this anger is often tied in with the self-respect and self-love gained by the surviving woman, but also represents the incorporation of feminist ideas into the horror narrative.

Anger is something that is often denied women, woman as the delicate sex is not meant to express her anger. The expression of anger is thought to be the domain of men, and an angry man is not a unique sight. Anger often is considered to be an emotion that men are allowed to express: "[m]en are stereotypically perceived to express their anger more directly and in a more antagonistic way than do women."[549] The direct expression of anger is attributed to men because it involves confrontation and taking up space. Anger's loudness and volatility make it an emotion for the active and for the strong, characteristics usually not seen as the domain of women. Susi Kaplow argues that women are often talked out of their anger; that they are labelled as crazy and are made to think that their anger is not justified. She writes: "a woman has learned to hold back her anger: It's unseemly, aesthetically displeasing, and against the sweet, pliant feminine image to be angry."[550] The very definition of femininity, and by extension woman, rests on women controlling their emotions, particularly those as unsightly as anger.

Kaplow goes on to say that most women are frightened of their anger, and that "lacking confidence in herself and in her own perceptions, she backs away from a fight or, following the rules of chivalry, lets someone else do battle for her. Strong emotions disturb her for the disruption they bring to things-as-they-are."[551] The expression of anger is tied to self-confidence, something women often lack. They are taught to mistrust their feelings, to detract from their own authority because they are ignorant and therefore should not engage. As Erica Jong notes, "nothing is more destructive of the spirit and ultimately creativity than false

[549] A. H. Fischer and C. Evers, "The social costs and benefits of anger as a function of gender and relationship context," *Sex Roles*, 65 (2011), 23.
[550] S. Kaplow, "Getting Angry" in *Radical Feminism*, ed. A Koedt, E. Levine and A. Rapone (New York: Quadrangle Books, 1973), 37.
[551] Ibid., 38.

meekness and anger that does not know its own name."[552] Within contemporary horror film male antagonists, within the horror narratives already mentioned, often are represented as misogynistic. This is the motive for their actions and is demonstrated by their use of verbal abuse and through their actions in trying to contain women and their expression of their own feelings. The most brutal reactions of the Surviving Woman are usually triggered by the blatant misogyny displayed by their attackers.

The anger of the Surviving Woman is, also, often tied to an attack on her loved ones or a violation of her body. This is not necessarily a rape in the same sense that a rape-revenge film, like the 1977 *I Spit on Your Grave* or *Ms. 45* (1981), deals with rape. The Surviving Woman can experience an actual rape, as the character of the wild woman does in *The Woman*. This can also be a violation of the self, an invasion of personal space, such as when the safety of the home is invaded by a killer, or an emotional rape such as a betrayal or a loss. In her analysis of the slasher film Clover states that "actual rape is practically non-existent in the slasher film." This rests on the premise that "violence and sex are not concomitant but alternatives, the one as much a substitute for and a prelude to the other as the teenage horror film is a substitute and a prelude to the 'adult' film."[553]

Clover does posit the rape-revenge narrative as a subgenre of horror. She writes that *I Spit on Your Grave* (1977) is a transparent example of the revenge plot "so popular in modern horror."[554] Clover's analysis of the rape-revenge film places the transformation of the rape victim to avenger in the same terms as the Final Girl. Clover argues for a reading of the rape-revenge narrative as "facilitating a movement from the 'feminine' (rape) to the 'masculine' (revenge)."[555] However, contemporary horror films work more within the framework posited by Halberstam: "rape…is not the sexual enactment of violence; it is still a violence but it is a violence enacted with bodily or fleshly weapons."[556] The men who engage in rape or sexual assault within contemporary horror films use their bodies as a weapon in an attempt to subdue the female characters. However, this does nothing more than thrust the Surviving Woman into a rage, and it highlights the importance of the body. The Surviving Woman is

[552] E. Jong, *What Do Women Want?: Power, Sex, Bread and Roses* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 1999), 41.
[553] C.J. Clover, *Men, Women and Chainsaws*, 29.
[554] Ibid., 115.
[555] J. Read, *The New Avengers: Feminism, Femininity and the rape-revenge cycle* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2000), 31.
[556] J. Halberstam *Skin Shows,*156.

angered by the violation of her body. An example of this is found in *P2* where the Surviving Woman begins her fight after she becomes aware of the extent to which her body has been violated. Prior to this she fled, hid and attempted to reach outside help. The turning point in her fight is when she realises what Thomas did to her while she was unconscious.

Thomas has set the perfect trap to catch the object of his desire when he disables her car and then chloroforms her. When she wakes up her business attire has been replaced by a white, Marilyn Monroe style dress. Whilst fleeing from Thomas after her escape she comes across a video of him undressing and touching her. In the video Thomas is talking to her unconscious form as if she were his lover. Knowledge of her changed outfit was a vague thought as the most immediate issue when she first woke up, after being knocked unconscious, was that she was tied to a chair and being held hostage. However, the visual proof shows Angela that she was violated. After watching the video Angela screams in rage and smashes the video. Of course Thomas captures her once again and when she escapes for the second time she does not attempt to barter or hide until help arrives. Rather, whereas prior to this she was frightened and wanted to escape, she now fights to avenge herself for her violation.

The video and her subsequent anger trigger her active fighting for her freedom. She has suffered a two-fold violation: the first was being held against her will, and the second was the violation of her body. The outfit Thomas chooses for Angela speaks of his view of her as a sexual object: she fits physically with the woman he wishes to possess. Though he speaks of her virtue, and in fact kills a man who drunkenly tried to have sex with her, for him she is his sex object. This is shown through the video, but Angela does not comply to the role he has chosen for her. Prior to her discovery of the video, she destroys the security cameras in an effort to avoid his gaze. This act can be tied to the idea in classical cinema that "within the film text itself, men gaze at women, who become objects of the gaze…the spectator, in turn, is made to identify with this gaze and to objectify the women on the screen."[557] Angela's act of smashing the cameras can be seen as her rejection of this objectification. Her anger at his violation culminates in the closing scene. Here, after an escape attempt is thwarted once again, Thomas offers to help her. This is a trap and Angela reacts by assaulting him. She is further angered at his offers to help when he is the reason she is in danger in the first place.

[557] E.A. Kaplan. *Women & Film: Both Sides of the Camera*, (London: Methuen & Co, 1983), 15.

A study of women's reactions to unwanted sexual advances states: "if anger in response to sexual threat mobilizes a woman to engage in assertive resistance, it may be adaptive."[558] Women must learn to detect and thwart the danger placed upon them by unwanted advances and as such this reflects the adaptive character transformation the Surviving Woman must go through in order to best her assailant. *P2* ends with a scene in which Thomas tied, trapped and bleeding. Angela has managed to reverse their positions within the narrative and now he is at her mercy. Thomas is initially going to be left alive, but this was until he verbally assaults her, as mentioned earlier. However, she cannot allow his sexism and hatred for women to continue in the world and, as an expression of female rage, Angela sets him on fire. This extreme reaction is generated by the overt expression of his misogyny through the use of the word "bitch." Much like Beth's decision to kill her assailant in *Hostel Part 2* after he refers to her as "cunt", Angela reacts with violence to this verbal assault.

The characters of the surviving women in *P2* and *While She Was Out* point to the passivity of the Surviving Woman at the beginning of the narrative. Angela is mistreated by many people around her, she cannot even stand up to her sister and willingly accepts an apology from a co-worker who attempted to force himself on her. Della is abused by her husband and cannot even stand up for herself to a waitress who gets her name wrong even after she spells it for her. This seemingly inconsequential scene is another reminder of Della's defeated nature at the beginning of the film. These events are designed to show how mild-mannered these women are in order to build them up as the narrative progresses. The scenes also foreshadow that these passive women have a well of "unexpressed anger" which "lies within them like an undetonated device."[559] The horror film is the vehicle through which these women detonate the device, as they first direct their anger towards the assailant. Della then goes home and stands up to her husband whilst Angela is shown walking from the site of her captivity as fire fighters and police arrive on scene, too late. These endings point towards a new self-sufficiency found within these women which they then take with them into their new lives.

The Surviving Woman is also angered by the self-righteousness of her attackers. In *Texas Chainsaw Massacre: The Beginning* Chrissie is sitting at the table with the demented family. The sheriff is saying Grace and thanking the Lord for His generous bounty, and Chrissie

[558] E. N. Jouriles, L. S. Rowe, R. McDonald, and A. L. Kleinsasser, "Women's expression of anger in response to unwanted sexual advances," *Psychology of Violence*, 4, no. 2 (2014), 171.
[559] A. Lorde, "The Uses of Anger," *Women's Studies Quarterly*, 25, no.1/2 (1997), 280

reacts by questioning the incestuous relationships within the family. She is accused of blasphemy and then taken away to be killed. The sheriff protects and feeds his family by killing people but becomes enraged at any hint that any taboo sexual relationships may be taking place within his family. This double standard of attitudes can also be found in the *Saw* films and the character of Jigsaw. The killer of this film series places people in mechanical death traps. Jigsaw selects his victims through the process of morally judging them as not living life in the proper way. This of course contrasts with his role as murderer.

In *P2* Thomas has a dog that he uses as part of his security guard duties as well as to track Angela down when she escapes from him. He unleashes his dog upon Angela and is upset when Angela kills it when it attacks her. He then accuses her of trying to get him fired and of disobeying what he wishes her to do. The self-righteousness and self-importance of the killers in contemporary horror feed into the anger of the Surviving Woman, representing a distinct shift from the traditional slasher era's way of depicting killers. This also taps into cultural ideas about gender and highlights the potentially oppressive nature of men in power.

Preservation (2014) is a film that expresses the role of love and anger within the formation of the Surviving Woman. Wit is on a hunting trip with her husband and his brother. On their first night in the woods their equipment is taken and they are marked with an "X." They are now aware they are being hunted, and the group gets separated from each other the two men are dispatched by the group hunting them. With his dying breath her husband radios her, telling her that if she runs she will die and her only chance is to fight. Wit's fight is powered both by love and anger. She is angered by the destruction of her family, the threat to her unborn child, and her love for her unborn child and her dead husband, allows her to control her rage. Her fury ebbs when those who destroyed her family and threatened her unborn child, are dead. There is a moment in the film when, having dispatched two of the group who killed her husband and brother-in-law, she believes that is the last of them. As soon as she becomes aware of a third person her resolve returns. This is shown in the film when her sigh of relief is interrupted by a text message, from a phone she had taken off of one of the killers, asking if they had found her yet. She reads this and strides off with determination once more to hunt down the final killer involved. Wit expresses the difference between a hero and a villain. Her rage is focused, she demonstrates that "anger can illuminate with clarity and

precision while energizing action."[560] This is constructive anger that is juxtaposed to the wilful, joyful and game-like approach to death that the killers demonstrate.

The most telling of changes in the emotional range of the Surviving Woman can be seen most clearly in remakes of films. Braudy argues: "The remake – like its close kin, the adaptation or the sequel – is a species of interpretation."[561] Thus the messages derived from a remake may be different from the original, as a remake can highlight different aspects of a film and characters. If the horror film and the theory behind it have remained unchanged then such a drastic change in the Surviving Woman would be pointless. However, as this is obviously not the case the changes between original text and remake is explained by the films' changes in time and social contexts.

One of Clover's quintessential Final Girls was given a makeover in the remake of *Halloween*. This remake changed many aspects of the *Halloween* story, as it focusses more on Michael Myer's childhood and how he developed into the large, silent, mask wearing psychopath. When we first see Laurie she is reminiscent of her 1979 counterpart. She is dressed in jeans, a zip up hooded jacket and is wearing glasses. The viewer's introduction to Laurie is very similar to the original. She is aware of Michael's presence where others are not, is described by her friends as the good girl, the one who is cautious and needs to be pushed by her friends to take risks. The remake still deploys the music and the stalking scenes of the original. Point of view shots show the audience Michael's perspective as he watches Laurie and we see her reacting to his watching.

This would seem to indicate that little has changed between the original and the remake. However, the remake differs in the details of her character seen at the beginning of the film. Laurie is an integral part of her friendship group. Her relationship with her adoptive parents is depicted as a loving one and, unlike the parents of most of the 1980 slasher films, they are present and involved with her life. Laurie is presented as a tomboy, but this aspect of her "does not really distinguish her from her friends."[562] The final fight between Michael and Laurie is more harrowing in this remake. Laurie is taken to the Myers' home after being

[560] L. C. Olson, "Anger Among Allies," *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 97, no. 3 (2011), 284.
[561] L. Braudy, "Afterword: Rethinking Remakes" in *Play it again, Sam: Retakes on remakes*, ed. A. Horton and S. Y. McDougal (Los Angeles: University of California UP, 1998), 327.
[562] D. Roche. *Making and Remaking Horror in the 1970s and 2000s: Why Don't They Do It Like They Used To?* (Mississippi: University of Mississippi UP, 2014), 112.

knocked out, and when she comes to she has been placed next to the gravestone of her birth mother. She now stabs Michael and flees and he is shot by Loomis, who has just arrived. This scene unfolds in the same way as in the original film, with Laurie being saved by an outside source and her personal agency being thwarted once again. Then Michael rises once more and tries to capture Laurie as she escapes she takes Loomis' gun. This Laurie runs, screams, falls through a ceiling and then out of a second storey window when Michael charges at her; this incarnation of Laurie "endures more than the 1978 Laurie."[563] She then awakens splayed on top of an unconscious Michael, blood running from her wounds as she shoots him. Her fight is constructed as more of a scramble for survival, more in line with contemporary surviving women who claw and actively fight for their freedom from the nightmare. The remake also highlights the importance of the abject within the journey of the Surviving Woman, for Laurie "kills" Michael only after she is covered in blood.

The real change in Laurie can be seen in the remake of *Halloween II*. Following on from the events of the first film, Laurie is found walking the streets covered in blood and is taken to hospital where the audience are shown the full extent of her injury. The doctors cut her clothes off, her broken bones protrude from her skin, her leg is ripped open and blood coats her body. Her body is shown slowly being put together as stitches are placed and rods are fixed to remnants of bone. This is in stark contrast to the aftermath of the original *Halloween* and the beginning of *Halloween II* (1981). The original Laurie emerges from her ordeal traumatized and shaken up but marred only by some scratches and bruising. The broken body of the recent version of Laurie becomes an external representation of her fractured love and trust with the world. She is shown partying and drinking with friends, and her clothing in this film aligns with the punk or alternative attitude. She rages at those who show concern for her and rebels against the life she had prior to knowing about Michael and her connection to him.

When Laurie awakens from her surgery she limps on her newly re-constructed leg to sit by her friend, Annie's, bedside. Annie is also recovering from her encounter with Michael. Laurie weeps over Annie and begs her not to die. This reflects a distinct separation between the original slasher era and contemporary films, as emotional displays over the loss of loved ones are a unique aspect. This is particularly evident when examining 2007 Laurie's grief over Annie compared 1978 Laurie's lack of time to grieve. Grief, the emotions that death

[563] Ibid.

brings forth is a key aspect to the creation of the Surviving Woman and to the audience's ability to sympathise and cheer her on against the killer. The narrative follows Michael finding Laurie at the hospital and we are brought into the present by Laurie waking up from a dream two years later. Laurie now resides with the sheriff and her friend Annie. Both Annie and Laurie's faces are covered with scars and they are both struggling with the events that took place. Laurie's once happy disposition has now been replaced by an angry, bitter persona. Her relationship with Annie has crumbled under the memory of Michael, her scarred face reminding Laurie of the danger she put her in. Annie looks after Laurie, making sure she eats and is cared for. Laurie reacts angrily to this, driven by guilt as Laurie holds herself, because of her birth family, as responsible for Annie nearly dying. These changes in the make-up of characters makes the impact of Michael's actions more than just physical trauma. Michael has invaded all aspects of Laurie's life, the emotional trauma that she has suffered at his hands is as important in her development as her physical trauma.

The alternative to anger can be argued to be the catatonia of Sally in the original *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*: "Anger is much more powerful and reassuring than anxiety, which is the antithesis of power."[564] The problem with Laurie in the new interpretation of *Halloween* is that her anger gives way to moments of anxiety. She imagines herself responsible for Annie's death, sees herself killing Annie, and this fuels her anxiety which feeds her anger as she tries to repress her feelings of weakness. Laurie differs from other representations of surviving women in that her anger is all-consuming and she cannot focus it. As Olson asserts, "anger's propensity to become uncontrolled, injurious, or destructive rage makes it dangerous."[565] As a result Laurie dies while trying to kill Loomis, who has used the tragedy of the previous film to become rich and famous. Once Michael has been killed, Loomis is the source of anger for Laurie because he has profited from her tragedy.

This anger towards Loomis is depicted through other people. The father of one of the victims of the first film aims a gun at him, the sheriff is outraged by his re-telling of the events of the first film, Michael focuses on him as a target for his rage and Laurie only finds out her connection to Michael and her true family ties through his book. Her identity as Laurie is destroyed by Loomis, the last vestiges of her connections to the people around her seemingly

[564] H. S. Sullivan, "The illusion of personal individuality," *Psychiatry: Journal for the study of Interpersonal Processes*, 13 (1950), 328.
[565] L. C. Olson, "Anger Among Allies," *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 97, no. 3 (2011), 284.

shattered by this revelation. Laurie's refusal to move on, to let the nightmare of her encounter with Michael end, keeps her alive. But in the end Laurie is overwhelmed by the knowledge of her connection to Michael and becomes gripped by a psychosomatic illusion of Michael as a child and her birth mother. She has fallen into her anxiety and is encouraged down the same murderous path by the image of her mother when she takes up Michael's knife and tries to kill Loomis. Police kill her as they had killed her brother moments before as she stands over Loomis' body knife in hand. The film ends with the song "Love Hurts," for the film is about love. "Love Hurts" is a fitting conclusion to the films; Michael shows his love in a killing spree in his psychotic attempt to get his family back and Laurie's love for her friends and family became twisted by her encounter with Michael, resulting in rage, grief and anxiety. In the narrative of these films, love really did hurt all those around Michael and Laurie. The last scene is of Laurie in a white medical room smiling sinisterly as her mother walks towards her. This implies that the psychosis that gripped Michael has also taken hold of Laurie and that she may become like her brother.

The idea of the Surviving Woman falling into homicidal anger, differing from the survival anger displayed by the other characters within this chapter, can be seen in other films where the absence of loss of love, trust and identity creates an emptiness within the Surviving Woman. *American Mary* (2012) for example is the story of a medical student, a budding surgeon, who through financial necessity turns to the underground scene of body modification. After her teacher rapes her, she quits medical school and starts practising body modification full time. During this time her actions are still justified, for circumstances have forced her into a somewhat questionable field but she is still in control of her actions. It is only when her grandmother, who seems to be her only family and whom she seems to love very much dies that she begins to spiral. Her loss of someone to love and of being loved turns her into something that she was not before. Her violent actions increase and she begins to cut out of her life people whom she had regarded as friends. In the film *Shrooms* (2007) an act of betrayal produces the same effect. Here the betrayal is a loss of love and it causes the female hero to turn on her friends.

Halloween's Laurie and her fall into homicidal anger are juxtaposed to Annie. She has moved on from the nightmare, she is more mature, taking on the role of caregiver to her father and Laurie. Annie is shown cooking all the meals, rushing to Laurie's side when she is sick and trying to look after her father's health. She does not seem to be haunted by nightmares and

she is unaware of Michael's return until the mere moments before she is killed. Laurie's nightmares, her anger and her guilt are a constant reminder of Michael and she does not let her guard down. She finds Annie's body and in a mimicry of the first film, she cries over Annie's body and begs her not to die but this time help is not forthcoming. Her last vestiges of love and support die in her arms and she is only given one moment of quiet grief before Michael strikes. In the original slasher films Clover examines, this closeness between two women would not have been explored, nor would it have been given such a central position in the creation of Laurie as the Surviving Woman.

Grief and loss are given supreme focus in this remake. Annie and Laurie both lost the innocence of their youth, they learnt the true evil within the world and survived but it thrust them into an adulthood that Laurie, at least, seemed unable to carry. Moving away from my analysis of *Halloween*, grief has become a central aspect of contemporary horror films. Grief is inherently gendered, as women are considered to be more expressive with their emotions and this "emotionality tends to be associated with weakness, powerlessness, uncontrollability, and impulsivity, such inferred dispositions come also to be associated with women."[566] The presence of grief in horror films points to a renegotiation of this stereotypical association between the expression of emotion and weakness. It points to an alignment of emotion, an ethics of care and the enactment of female heroism. It is present in *Alien Resurrection* and shown through Ripley's emotional investment in the human hybrid alien. Within this scene the audience are invited to join Ripley in her grief through the connection that has been built up over the course of the series[567] and when she kills the creature for the good of humanity we see and feel her grief. *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* highlights loss in a scene where Erin finds one of her friends near death and must end his suffering. Scenes of grieving now have become deeply imbedded alongside scenes of bodily annihilation. This highlights the justice in their actions, and the killer deserves death because he has caused all the losses and the grief that has befallen the Surviving Woman. This is not just because he kills, but because he causes the Surviving Woman to kill as well. The importance of grief highlights the role of emotion in the narratives and further pulls the Surviving Woman away from the masculine Final Girl. Expressing emotion is tied in with how women have been constructed as weak but

[566] A. Fischer and M. LaFrance, "What Drives the Smile or the Tear," *Emotion Review*, 7, no. 2 (2015), 22.
[567] A Powell, *Deleuze and Horror Film* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2005), 76.

the realignment of emotions and heroism points to an inherent strength that comes from the expression of emotion.

Within contemporary horror there seems to be an attempt to redeem the many dead women who have littered the screen over the years. Women in horror have traditionally been victims or, through Clover's reading of the Final Girl, masculinised heroes. Prior to this current state, beginning with *Scream*, women had not been allowed to act as agents of their own sex. In the context of the films discussed in this chapter, female characters have been fighting for their right to self-respect, for their love of each other and against the abuses endured by their sex. These films are not feminist in essence, but they carry the influence of feminism thought. Bodies hold the utmost importance in these narratives, as sites of disintegration and as sites of liberation. It is through the body that the protagonists survive, taking control of situations through her physical actions. As the horror genre has become more self-aware its "gender issues are being brought out into the open."[568] Other films not discussed in this chapter have drawn attention to the lack of subordination of women in contemporary horror. The remake of the Australian horror film *Patrick* refuses to allow its female characters "to be subjugated to the objectification of the male gaze, every woman in the film is given agency and a role to play independent of male-motivated plot points."[569] The original *Patrick* (1978) also did not adhere to the image of the Final Girl as she appeared in the 1970s and 1980s slasher film. However like many other films *Patrick* fell outside the purview of theorists who were examining slasher films of the 1970s and 1980s, and its progressive portrayal of female characters has gone largely unnoticed until its remake appeared on screens. This film offers one example of the changing roles of women in horror films. It highlights how often women have been relegated to the background, not only in the horror genre, with its history of being more open to placing women in the foreground, but also in film more generally. This is not the only film to have represented women in this way, as this thesis has shown.

The rise in female focused horror points to changing attitudes towards women, their independence and their sense of self-reliance. Unlike Clover's Final Girl the Surviving Woman does not need to make recourse to masculine power bases in order to survive, as she has a well of untapped love and anger as her source. The representations of women in

[568] A. Gilmorr, "Feminist Horror," *Herizon,* 29, no. 1 (2015), 21
[569] T. Judah, "Every Breath You Take: Mark Hartley's *Patrick,*" *Metro Magazine*, 180 (2014), 18.

contemporary horror connect with many of the ideas that Erica Jong put forth regarding women and their relationship to writing. Jong writes: "women have never been left alone to *be* themselves."[570] In the horror narrative women are left with no recourse except to their own selves. She goes on to say that "we were told we were weak; yet as we grow older, we increasingly knew that we were strong."[571] Passive women like Angela and Della find their strength and discover their potential, who they would be and deep down were all along. The horror narrative introduces them to their latent power that emerges through their anger. Jong concludes her exploration of the state of women writers as moving from anger to empathy,[572] and the Surviving Woman achieves both of these states within herself.

Love, anger and grief are all aspects of the new Surviving Woman. She functions in a world where her emotions give her power and where her role as hero is based on her affinity with others. As she has become angrier, she has also highlighted the gendered nature of this anger. The anger is directed towards men who reveal a deep hatred for women. The films mentioned within this chapter may not be considered feminist but the inclusion of the importance of the female body as belonging to women and as not being objects of for men to use as well as the foregrounding of emotion in the structuring of the Surviving Woman highlights the influence of feminism in mainstream culture. Contemporary horror narratives have seen an increase in the centrality of women in many different character roles. Women are not only just present as heroes or monstrosities any longer, for the films often revolve around women and the interlocking aspects of their lives, their friendships and their losses. The importance of women within horror narratives has increased and it is not only in Western horror films that this is evident. The following chapter examines the role of women in horror films from around the globe.

[570] E. Jong, *What Do Women Want?: Power, Sex, Bread and Roses* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 1999), 42.
[571] Ibid.
[572] Ibid. 45.

Chapter Six:
Women in Horror around the World.

"As demonstrated by the success of J-Horror, K-Horror, and the New French Extremity, horror audiences have voraciously consumed genre films from around the world."

- Alexandra Heller-Nicholas
Found Footage Horror Films.

"Once you see it, you can never forget. Once it sees you, you can never escape"

- Tagline.
The Grudge (2004).

The access limitations surrounding film have been erased by the advent of video, DVD and the internet. Audiences now seek out "more exotic and extreme forms of horror"[573] which may come from other countries. The re-release of horror on DVD and its accessibility in internet stores, as well as fan sites where people increase each other's film knowledge by discussing their personal tastes and preference, have led to an explosion in the viewership of these films. As Ian Olney writes in his analysis of European horror, the remediation of European horror films, the transference from video to digital, has led to "a dramatic increase in the size and widening of the demographic of Euro horror's audience."[574] Fan culture has been one of the driving forces behind this increase in the presence of international films being more widely circulated. Cherry writes that fans discuss their personal favourite films and these discussions include "the availability of various films (with European fans offering to make copies for their US counterparts)."[575] This community of horror fans allows for the

[573] S. Hantke, "Introduction," *American Horror Film: The Genre at the turn of the millennium* ed. Steffen Hantke (Oxford: University of Mississippi UP, 2010), xxii
[574] I. Olney, *Euro Horror: Classic European Horror Cinema in Contemporary American Culture* (Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 2013), 64.
[575] B.Cherry, ""Beyond *Suspiria*: The place of European Horror Cinema in the Fan Canon" in *European Nightmares: Horror Cinema in Europe since 1945*, ed. P. Allmer, E. Brick and D. Huxley (New York: Wallflower Press, 2012), 29.

access and circulation of films and has created a contact point for fans to gain access to material that would otherwise be hard to obtain. This increased access to a range of horror from various countries and cultures has increased the visibility of national cinemas as well as an increase in theoretical interaction with these films. This cross-cultural exchange of movies means that ideas, concepts and tropes circulate and influence other national cinemas and re-invigorate the creative aspect of filmmaking. They also influence narrative and character development, which will be the main thrust of this chapter.

Exploring horror from different cultural contexts also helps expand the view of the significance of women in horror films. It is not only in the role of Surviving Woman and female monster that women appear in horror films. Around the globe women feature heavily in a range of different roles, some correlate to aspects found in American horror films and the subgenres of horror that have developed out of the slasher film but others vary significantly from this model. This chapter will explore horror works from around the world and the different roles women play in these films. The chapter begins with an analysis of Australian horror film and how this particular 'Australian-ness' impacts the international success of these films and also imbue them with a particular trait that differs from American horror films. The importance of the Australian film and its addition to the significance of women in horror will be examined through the films *The Babadook* (2013) and *The Loved Ones* (2009). These two films demonstrate two opposite aspects to the representation of women in contemporary horror films. Asian horror, primarily Japanese horror, will occupy an important part in the chapter as women operate in a number of ways in these films. French horror, such as in *High Tension* (2003) offers a re-working of the idea of a killer who is "in gender distress."[576] The film *Livid* also offers a French re-imagining of the vampire myth that deals with young women whose lives are affected by the choices of their mothers. One of the young women is haunted and broken by her mother's suicide, the other has had her body physically broken by her mother and has been imprisoned in her mother's mansion for decades. These two girls find in each other the support and love that they lost or could not find in their mothers. The film also explores the portrayal of the monstrous –feminine in a different cultural setting. Following on from the French reimaging of the vampire myth, this chapter looks at the Spanish film series *REC* (2007-2014) and its use of found footage styling

[576] C.J. Clover. *Men, Women and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film.* (New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1993), 27.

and its development of a divergence from standard zombie plotlines. Finally, the chapter will look at the Norwegian horror film series *Cold Prey* (2006-2010), films featuring traits found in films like *Halloween.* All these films add to and alter the slasher narrative by rounding out supporting characters as more than two-dimensional victims. The strong Surviving Woman is not masculinised and they feature a killer whose personal history is included in the narrative to heighten his human nature. These films have given depth to the genre and in the process have added to the development of the female protagonist.

There has been a great deal of critical reflection on the development of Japanese horror and the thriving horror genre of other Asian countries. European horror has begun to be examined but still "remains a little explored field."[577] Scandinavian horror also falls into this category as it is only in its infancy and as such has not been examined by many theorists in any in-depth way. For the purposes of this study the films will be closely examined to trace trends developing between them and to give an insight into this developing genre. The films have also been chosen with consideration to how they represent cultural differences but also show similarities to established American film genres or subgenres and therefore comparisons can be drawn between them.

Ryan has argued that "[c]ultural policy's narrowness has tended to 'shut out' some genres from funding environments and mainstream film culture – so much so that horror and action/adventure movies…have barely been recognized as Australian filmmaking traditions." The funding of Australian horror films has often favoured art house cinema at the expense of popular films.[578] Genre cinema in Australia has often been restricted due to the particular forms of production in Australia, and as such "commercial, sometimes non-culturally specific and international in their appeal, commercial genre movies have been antithetical to these aspirations."[579] Yet, despite this lack of support from home-grown audiences horror holds a strong place in Australian film.

[577] P. Allmer, E. Brick and D. Huxley, "Introduction" in *European Nightmares: Horror Cinema in Europe since 1945*, ed. P. Allmer, E. Brick and D. Huxley (New York: Wallflower Press, 2012), 1.
[578] M. D. Ryan, "Towards an understanding of Australian genre cinema and entertainment," *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies*, 24, No. 6 (2010), 847.
[579] Ibid., 845.

When horror emerged in Australian film in the 1970s these narratives "exploited fears of Australia's wide open spaces."[580] Isolation and emptiness were counterpoised against the horrors in the narrative. The focus on imbuing films produced in Australia with culturally specific Australian traits has seemed to act against the production of horror films. However, many horror films produced in Australia "have been distinctly 'Australian' – containing identifiably Australian character types, settings and cultural themes – and consumed in national and international markets as 'Australian horror films.'"[581] The Australian nature of these films, demonstrated in the landscape, soundscape and character types, has been part of the success of these films in other countries, with many of these films using new modes of distribution "to reach international audiences via the popular Netflix Instant streaming platform."[582] The interesting thing about this international success is that often these films have not found as much success within the local markets. Within international markets "the genre is a proven winner even though the homeland's attitudes towards these films remain disappointingly stagnant."[583]

The female-directed *Babadook* delves into issues of motherhood in the face of grief and loss. Amelia is a woman dealing with the loss of her husband, loneliness and the demands of her son. The demands of her son are depicted as wearing on her as his repeated cries for attention and his increasingly strange behavior take their toll. Every private moment is interrupted by her son, and the buildup of rage culminates with the appearance of the Babadook. The film balances itself between interpretation of supernatural monster or a psychosis, and Amelia is suffering from sleep deprivation which causes sudden outbursts of rage which are then counterbalanced by her feelings of guilt. Gilmorr notes: "The film's complicated portrayal of Amelia is grounded in the simple feminist acknowledgement that, yes, sometimes motherhood is hard"[584] and the focus on the mother as flawed, broken but not monstrous is a rare sight in horror films. The film culminates in Amelia battling the Babadook, turning her maternal rage at her son into maternal protective anger against the Babadook. Whether in the

[580] R. Kuipers, "Horror in Australian Cinema," *Australian Screen*, http://aso.gov.au/titles/ collections/horror-in-australian-cinema/ Accessed 5 September 2015.
[581] M. D. Ryan, "Towards an understanding of Australian genre cinema and entertainment," *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies*, 24, No. 6 (2010), 847.
[582] G. Dunks, "Down and Out Down Under: Aussie Horror and International Distribution" *Metro Magazine*, 180 (2014), 36
[583] Ibid. 37
[584] A. Gilmorr, "Feminist Horror," *Herizon,* 29, no. 1 (2015), 23.

end the viewer decides that the Babadook is real or Amelia's dark half born from her grief and anger, the Babadook is a vehicle for representing the inherent difficulties of motherhood. The focus on the emotional trauma Amelia suffers taps into broader changes in the focus of emotion as crucial to the portrayal of women in horror. The film portrays a woman trying to cope with guilt and motherhood, largely unsupported by the world around her and the way it depicts this experience is new and refreshing.

The film leaves the viewer on a positive note, as the Babadook is banished to the basement and kept sated with bowls of worms. Love between mother and son is restored, her relationship with the world is returned to a positive mood and colour has seeped into the previously grey tones of the film. *The Babadook* undertakes a deep exploration of the mental state of a single mother, showing that love can heal wounds but one must acknowledge the rage that lives alongside the responsibility of motherhood. This is shown in the closing scenes where the mother feeds the Babadook and must soothe it to keep it from overwhelming her again. Particularly Australian cultural aspects imbue the film. As Amelia and her son watch television *Skippy* is on the screen and the Australian-ness features in "the eerie, cicada-like hum we hear whenever the Babadook is near."[585] The presentation of motherhood in such terms is unusual. It has been argued that the film references *The Shining* and that within the character of Amelia is embodied "both the feminine and the masculine – the nurturing protectiveness of Wendy (Shelley Duvall) *and* the unleashed aggression of Jack."[586] Yet an alternate argument is that in Amelia there lies both the monstrous-feminine and the maternal-feminine. Her character has no recourse to masculinity as her story is focused around the maternal, and the film situates her in a clearly delineated feminine space. Her story is very much one of women and of their place in the world. It explores the expectations they face as mothers and the guilt from feeling as if they are failing when they are just struggling against challenging situations. *The Babadook* falls into the new trend discussed in the previous chapter of highlighting the pressures, the expectations and the place women hold in society.

The Loved Ones flies against Clover's statement that "female killers are few and their reasons for killing significantly different than men's."[587] *The Loved Ones* centres on a rejected girl

[585] B. Kidd, "Umbilical Fears," *Metro Magazine*, 180 (2014), 8.
[586] Ibid., 11.
[587] C.J. Clover. *Men, Women and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film.* (New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1993), 29.

with homicidal tendencies. In a twist on the Norman Bates theme it is her father, with whom she is fascinated who is also complicit in her crimes. Her father appears to be there to help his little princess get her prince, but unfortunately it seems that no man is ever good enough and this results in the princes being lobotomised. The interesting gendered aspect of this film is its subversion of the usually male killer and female victim. The film also highlights a growing trend in the surviving men in contemporary horror. Although this aspect is outside the scope of this thesis, it will be returned to briefly in the Conclusion. Unlike Mrs. Vorhees in *Friday the 13th*, Lola, the murderess in this film, is featured in pink dresses and party hats. Her persona has not been masculinised in order to explain away her psychotic tendencies, but rather her girl-ishness is highlighted in her dress and in her father's pet names for her. In the dynamics of the relationship between her father and her, it is clear that she holds the upper hand. Moreover he has lobotomised his own wife in favour of his daughter. In a review of the film, Marsh notes how "it's standard slasher practice for the principal baddie to remain either faceless or detestable or both, *The Loved Ones* bucks the trend: Its killer is the most charismatic character in the film."[588] The significance of a female killer who is not co-opted as a masculine figure stands as a far cry from the days of classic slasher films. For example, *Sleepaway Camp* (1983) features a seemingly female killer only to reveal in the final scene that the girl is actually a boy. In contrast *The Loved Ones* seems to glory in the surface femininity of its killer. Lola is not even in the grips of a psychotic break forced by past trauma or repressed identity. She just wants what she wants and will use any means necessary to find her prince. Lola is not explained or justified through recourse to mental breaks from past trauma. Her actions, as horrible as they are, are her own.

Australian exploitation cinema of the 1970s and 1980s was characterised by the standard of exploitation cinema around the world. Exploitation film is "generally characterized by gratuitous or 'excessive' nudity, extreme violence, gore, explosions, and so on, driven by sensational marketing, and generally regarded by high-brow critics as 'bad film' rather than quality or serious cinema."[589] Such films place women often naked and terrorized. However, Australia also features women who fight back against the aggression of their male attackers. The 1986 film *Fair Game* follows the rape-revenge narrative but culminates with the woman

[588] C. Marsh, "The Loved Ones," *Slant Magazine*, http://www.slantmagazine.com/film/review/the-loved-ones (2012). Last accessed 5 September 2015.
[589] M. D. Ryan, "Towards an understanding of Australian genre cinema and entertainment," *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies*, 24, No. 6 (2010), 847.

gaining her revenge. The women in the two recent films analysed in this section add a further dimension to women in horror, not only in Australia but also internationally. The struggling mother, Amelia, haunted by loss and possibly a supernatural entity, inspires sympathy with her audience. The homicidal, psychotic Lola is lacking in all sympathy, her actions cold and based on her own desires. These two films were chosen because of the vast difference in the representation of the female characters within them. The mother whose love wins out, her murderous rage abetted and colour brought back to their glum world is juxtaposed against the psychotic, sociopathic Lola whose world is filled with bright pinks and mirror balls that stand in stark contrast to the torture and blood that her actions call forth. Women feature in both of these films as women and not as sign of the masculine, something that fits in with the broader changes in horror cinema taking place right now.

Asian horror films tend to depict women as spirit avengers. Japanese horror, in particular, has something of a predisposition to these types of narratives. These vengeful ghost narratives have foundations in Kabuki theatre and folklore. R.J. Hand argues that Japanese horror film "draws on the storylines, structure, performance practice and iconography of traditional theatre as much as on the traditions and mechanisms of western horror."[590] The oldest Kabuki play that Japanese horror draws from, titled *Ghost Story of Yotsuya,* was first performed in 1821 and was based on an old Japanese folktale of Oiwa in which a man brings about the death of his wife, only to have her spirit wreak vengeance on him from beyond the grave.[591] The avengers are often portrayed wearing long white dresses, with long black hair covering their faces. The long black hair of these spirits is unkempt and straggly, a sign of their dead status and their inability to find peace in the other world. Commenting on the distinct cultural roots of Japanese horror film, Cherry writes that "the appearance of Japanese ghosts (who are traditionally female) derives from the funeral rites in the Edo period of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The dead would be dressed in a white burial kimono and if they were female their hair would be loose."[592] These films show the wronged woman gaining in death what she could not do in life, that is she gains the ability to stand up for herself and right the wrongs against her. Interestingly it is through the traditional representations of stereotypical

[590] R. J. Hand, "Aesthetics of Cruelty: Traditional Japanese Theatre and Horror Film" in *Japanese Horror Cinema,* ed. J. McRoy (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2006), 22.
[591] C. Balmain, *Introduction to Japanese Horror Film* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2008), 54.
[592] B. Cherry, *Horror* (London: Routledge, 2009), 196.

feminine beauty and the ideas of innocence and purity distorted by death that they gain the opportunity for revenge.

Furthermore Japanese horror is often focused around what are traditionally coded as feminine spaces, for example the home is often the stage for the horror that takes place. Although the American slasher film often takes place within the suburban home this is usually because something evil has invaded the home. In Japanese horror the evil deed has taken place before the events of the film, the film itself is about the consequences of this deed and the home itself is often portrayed as evil as it is the origin of the spirit. Spirits of the deceased residents come back in order to gain the justice they could not have in life. Unfortunately, because they are stuck as spirits, their need for justice transfers onto anyone who comes into contact with the house, and in some cases this spirals onto those who come into contact with those who have been in the house. "As in tragedy, one act of violence leads to another in a never-ending spiral that can only be resolved through the tragic hero's death."[593] Finding a hero in many of the recent incarnations of this vengeful spirit motif is difficult, and while the *Ringu* film comes close, even in this case the vengeful spirit, Sadako, cannot be contained. This difficulty in identifying a hero can be traced to the different filmic techniques adopted. *Ju-on: The Grudge* (2002) is filmed in an episodic fashion and Told in brings together the stories of six characters, all of whom come into contact with an accursed house and subsequently die as a result of the curse.[594] The Japanese vengeful spirit is eternal, because her pain is so great in life she continuously seeks revenge in death. Male ghosts do appear in Japanese horror films, but are not as "prolific or iconic."[595]

Within this type of horror, the abject is represented not in terms of corpses or blood, though some feature those as well, but through hair. The hair of the spirit moves as if alive, it slithers along walls and appears where it should not be. Hair in Japanese culture is tied to rituals of death and the performing of proper funeral rites, in the absence of these it was believed that hair could become possessed.[596] C. Derry has noted that, "[w]hatever complex, cultural references the image of long black hair evokes in Japan are largely lost on American

[593] C. Balmain, *Introduction to Japanese Horror Film* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2008), 56.
[594] Ibid., 143.
[595] Ibid., 83.
[596] Ibid., 67.

audiences,"[597] the cultural specificity of the hair motif may not be directly understood by western horror audiences. However, while this does not detract from the horror that this image creates it does signify a very specific cultural addition to the depiction of horror. The fixation on hair also stems from beliefs that female hair was associated with life, sexuality, and obviously fertility.[598] Thus Balmain's point that such "hair as a source of pollution and fear is…a constant trope in Japanese horror", it is repeated over and over again signalling a different approach to horror than the west.[599] The fixation on hair also signals a different relationship between women and horror, the vengeful woman and her possessed hair seem to stem from the lack of respect these women failed to receive in life, whereas the monstrous feminine emerges in western horror in the form of excess. This version of monstrosity appears to be the product of neglect. The hair is also abject in that it is often the first signifier of the spirit and therefore of death.

This differs from western portrayals and signifiers of the abject and death. The western horror film is splattered with the images of dismembered limbs and blood. The signifiers for impending death within this context are often the appearance of a knife or the sound of a scream. Although blood does appear in Japanese horror films, it is used in a different manner than that of its western counterpart. Within the western horror film blood is used to connote the disruption of the world by the killer, within Japanese horror blood is used as a secondary device for representing this aspect. The spirit's appearance and its hair are the primary indicators of the presence of a disturbance in the world. Hair as abject is a particular cultural signifier and while it has carried over to the American remakes of these films it nevertheless is closely tied up to Japanese culture and "these films must work significantly differently."[600] The viewer, however, regardless of their cultural heritage cannot deny the disturbing nature of hair within Japanese horror as it defies the boundaries of living and dead, inanimate and animate.

The abject also appears in the idea that these women must be the conduits of their own justice. They are victims of a crime, and Kristeva posits all crime is abject because it draws

[597] C. Derry, *Dark Dreams 2.0: A Psychological History of the Modern Horror Film* (North Carolina: McFarland and Company, 2005), 284
[598] C. Balmain, *Introduction to Japanese Horror Film* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2008), 67.
[599] Ibid.
[600] C. Derry, *Dark Dreams 2.0: A Psychological History of the Modern Horror Film* (North Carolina: McFarland and Company, 2005), 284-285.

attention to the fragility of law, but particularly it appears as abject when a loved one is responsible for a crime against you.[601] Within these vengeful spirit narratives the law fails these women, the justice system does not intervene nor are they saved by the police. The only justice these women have is that which they deliver. Within the film *Shutter* (2004), a Thai horror film, this idea of the abject nature of crime is fully explored through the trope of the vengeful spirit.

Tun, and Jane are haunted by the spirit of a young woman, Natre. Natre and Tun had a relationship and when Tun broke it off, she committed suicide, or so Tun tells Jane. However this is not the complete truth, Tun's friends actually raped Natre whilst Tun watched and took photos of the traumatic event. The interesting thing about this film is that the spirit of Natre is resting on Tun, and his physical weight has doubled. Tun has intense neck and shoulder pain. As he is without feelings of guilt and in fact has only been reminded of the event because of the haunting, he must carry her on his shoulders. His lack of acknowledgement of his guilt in the death of Natre is depicted in the film through a scene in which Tun, angered by his haunting, throws his camera across the room. The camera accidently takes a photo revealing Natre sitting on his shoulders. The spirit within this narrative works as a metaphor for guilt and past evils. This theme can also be seen in *Ju-on: The grudge*, in which the ghost is a victim of domestic violence and that her death is not prevented through recourse to the law. From the perspective of the abject, these women seek their own vengeance, they are a creation of the absence of law and a crime committed against them. These narratives reflect a cultural take on the rise of domestic violence in Japan. As Balmain notes, "cases of domestic violence have escalated in response to the economic recession of the late 1990s."[602] The spirits within these vengeful narratives appear culturally coded to signify changes in Japanese culture. As Jay McRoy writes, "they function allegorically, their demises inextricably linked with social transformations and the anxieties that often accompany such changes."[603] These spirits are endemic of the changes that are happening within Japanese society. Valerie Wee notes how in Confucian beliefs female violence is justified, "provoked and legitimate,"[604] because the male authority figure has failed to protect and guide them. Wee posits that "in such a situation, the women undergo a transformation from victim to villain/victimizer."[605]

[601] J. Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay in Abjection*, trans. L. S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia UP, 1982), 4.
[602] C. Balmain, *Introduction to Japanese Horror Film* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2008), 145.
[603] J. McRoy, *Nightmare Japan*: *Contemporary Japanese Horror Cinema* (New York: Rodopi, 2008, 87.
[604] V. Wee. *Japanese Horror and Their American Remakes* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 69.
[605] Ibid.

Men have let these women down; they have abused their authority and have turned these women into sources of destruction.

This can be read as detracting from women's ability to protect themselves but it can also be seen as a failure of male authority in respecting the rights of these women. The representation of anger here can be seen as similar to the anger of the Surviving Woman in chapter four. The anger of these spirits gives them the strength to seek revenge over their own deaths because others have left their pain and suffering to be forgotten. As we saw, the Surviving Woman embraces anger, allowing her to save herself as she knows no help is coming. This also brings to the fore the threat of male violence against women. The spirits of these vengeful spirit narratives are the victims of violence by men. The Surviving Woman is now under the threat of sexual violation and in the moments prior to her striking the final blow against her killer she is verbally assaulted with very derogatory, gendered terms. As suggested earlier, the distinct cultural aspects of these similar narratives is in the significance of the house as a safe, domestic space that has been cursed through the violence of men. The increase in narratives surrounding this crime and its recent emergence within Japanese horror point to a particular turning point in the history of Japan. In contrast the threat to women in Western horror narratives seems to have always been present, as women operated as viewers of the monster, victims of the psychopathic killer and as victims of sexual violence who must avenge their own violation. There was no other person left to do so.

An important aspect of Japanese horror then is a preoccupation that women appear in death as they did in their last moments alive. The ghost of *Ju-on* is lacking speech as she has her windpipe crushed in the last moments of her life and her body also moves as if it were still broken. In a climactic scene she drags herself down the stairs of the home, her body contorting in unnatural ways. While she has grown in spirit and strength in death, it retains the memory of her weakest moment, a reminder to those who witness her that she is the creation of violence, unjustified rage and the failure of the law. In the film *Ringu* a woman, Shizuko, has psychic powers, and she reveals her powers at a demonstration where she details a future catastrophic event, in front of a room filled with male journalists. She is called a freak by one of the journalists, and as a result her daughter, Sadako, who is also the wielder of an even greater psychic power than her mother, kills the journalist with a thought.

This then leads to the murder of Sadako and the suicide of Shizuko.[606] Shizuko and Sadako both present a threat to the patriarchy. In the above mentioned scene, "the men are threatened by more than Shizuko's possession of a knowledge that exceeds that of the patriarchal scientific community; it is her ability to vocalize this knowledge and, thereby, insert herself into the realm of public discourse."[607] Shizuko, and Sadako through her act of vengeful rage against the male journalist who insulted her mother, places herself in a place of knowledge and power which is rejected and condemned by the male figures around her. Ironically, these male figures do not heed her warning and consequently are unable to thwart a major disaster that she predicted. [608] Sadako is placed in a well by her father and when she appears on screen she still holds signifiers of her place of death, her hair is bedraggled as if wet, and water frequently appears in connection with Sadako. Her father is shown as a particularly neglectful man and after he murders Sadako, he "emerges as a tyrannical force that is both judge and executioner."[609] Not only has he killed his daughter, he exposed his wife to public humiliation and then killed his daughter for defending her mother when he failed to do so. In Wee's view, "he has relinquished his social, familial and patriarchal responsibilities."[610] These spirits must bear the memory of their weakness in life, but they must also bear the marks of the men's failure and abuse. Wee sees this as a negative portrayal of female power as the lack of ability to protect themselves disempowers women "by implying that any quest for vengeance or change is relegated to acts from beyond the grave," and that these women are "never inherently disruptive or dangerous in life."[611] Japanese horror operates on the logic that, "oppressed women are considered to be more powerful in death and more likely to take revenge."[612] This is depicted in their physical representation, as they bear the injuries that befell them in life. These act as reminders to their victims that their death is the result of a betrayal, an abuse or a failure of responsibility. Society has failed these women and they will continue to bear the marks of this failure in death. Again, this reminds society that these women have been driven to such vengeful acts because of a lack of social justice. Men in authority are absent from such films, just as in Western horror narratives. Absence and neglect of by male authority figures are represented through the fact that anybody who

[606] C. Balmain, *Introduction to Japanese Horror Film* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2008), 174.
[607] J. McRoy, *Nightmare Japan*: *Contemporary Japanese Horror Cinema* (New York: Rodopi, 2008), 87
[608] Ibid.
[609] V. Wee. "Patriarchy and the Horror of the Monstrous-Feminine," *Feminist Media Studies,* 11, no. 2. (2014), 155.
[610] Ibid.
[611] Ibid., 153.
[612] M. Blake & S. Bailey, *Writing The Horror Movie* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), 156.

threatens their home is a target for their vengeance. As Balmain writes, "the revenge of the wronged women is not just contained to those that committed the offence against them, but is taken more generally against Japanese paternalism as a whole."[613] The only hope these women have for justice is in the form of the female protagonist who investigates the curse. This is a world where women rescue women and a world in which men represent threat or neglect.

Sadako is in fact the one deviation from the innocent woman turned violent because she takes action to protect her mother before she dies. Importantly, "Sadako only reacts after the (male) reporters turn on her innocent mother."[614] Moreover she is given a more omnipresent power in death and like the other women of this narrative trope, Sadako is unable to stop her own death because, as mentioned above, these women can only gain vengeance through death. Sadako has the power to kill the journalist who derided her mother while she is alive, but it is the betrayal by her father and the act of filicide that unleashes her full vengeance. *Ringu* also offers an example of the disparity developing between old ideas of what it means to be a woman and new emerging ideas. Sadako does not step aside and allow her mother to be mistreated but defends her; "while Shizuko suffers the reporters' derision and criticism in silence and offers little resistance, Sadako (apparently) retaliates against the unfair male bullying by killing one of the aggressors."[615] This rebellious female spirit, the young girls and women who refuse to remain dead, can also be linked to cultural anxiety about changing gender roles in Japanese culture. During the 1990s there was an increase in "the emergence of a generation of sexually liberated women who deliberately rejected traditional notions of the chaste and submissive Japanese female and were actively pursuing sexual independence and (potentially controversial forms of) 'empowerment.'"[616] In *Ringu* this can be seen in the way Shizuko is willing to accept the derision of the male journalist, whereas Sadako reacts and executes him. As a result, she is punished by her mother who is created in the model of submissive womanhood, but she returns to revenge herself against her unfair treatment.

In *Apartment 1303* (2007), a film about a cursed apartment which leads its inhabitants to plummet to their deaths from the balcony, depicts how those who have been touched by the

[613] C. Balmain, *Introduction to Japanese Horror Film* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2008), 75.
[614] V. Wee. "Patriarchy and the Horror of the Monstrous-Feminine," *Feminist Media Studies,* 11, no. 2. (2014), 154.
[615] Ibid., 154.
[616] V. Wee. *Japanese Horror and Their American Remakes* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 102.

curse gain certain similarities with the originator of the curse. Yukiyo, the originator of the curse, once lived in the apartment with her mother. Her mother became abusive, and in a particularly physical encounter between them Yukiyo stabs her, and her mother ends up bleeding to death in a closet. Yukiyo continues living in the apartment, now haunted by her mother, and when a landlord threatens to evict them for failure to pay rent her mother taunts her with how she is hopeless without her help. Yukiyo throws herself from the balcony and since then any young woman who has rented the apartment repeats Yukiyo's actions. Only young women are infected by the curse, but they women suffer the kind of physical wounds that were inflicted by Yukiyo's mother on her daughter. During the spirit woman's death her mother ripped an earring from her ear and those that are cursed start bleeding from their ear as if they too have had an earring forcibly removed. The vengeful spirit narrative is fixated on the deaths of young women, as noted earlier, and perhaps an allusion to increased rates of domestic violence incidents in Japan in the 1990s. In *Apartment 1303* this danger within the domestic sphere is depicted through the idea that women who were once protected in their homes but are now in danger and this danger transfers from person to person. The home itself has become corrupted and dangerous.

Also significant is that once again hair plays an important role in the creation of horror in this film. In one particular scene, rope-like lengths of hair trap three women in the apartment and hold them captive, before they are forced from the balcony. Hair seems to grow from the walls, revealing the signs of Yukiyo's mother's growing hatred of her daughter. The hair strips back the wallpaper to reveal the words 'die, die, die' repeatedly written on the wall by her mother. Hair is used to hold the would-be-victims trapped so that the curse can be effected. Hair in this particular instance also shows how connected the spirit and the physical space that they haunt is. It does not just flow from the form of the spirit but is embedded into the walls. Hair, in this instance, has completely become a part of the haunted space. It is not just a sign of the presence of the avenging spirit but of the corruption the apartment embodies. This can be seen to represent the acts of Yukiyo since her death, and those of her mother towards her daughter in life. In addition it may reflect the guilt that Yukiyo feels from killing her mother. Like *Ju-on: The Grudge*, the curse of *Apartment 1303* is tied to a physical location, but in this narrative it is shown as part of the spirit, rather than alluding to where she died. The apartment was the site of Yukiyo's relationship with her mother, and like Norman Bates and the Bates Motel, Yukiyo is tied to the physical space. The result of this, like other vengeful spirit narratives, is that Yukiyo is trapped in her past, in her guilt and she cursed to

repeat the mistreatment she suffered at her mother's hand on other girls. Her guilt over her mother's death compels her spirit to protect the site as something sacred. However, as noted above she has embedded herself within the apartment and therefore has more control over the space than Norman did.

Yukiyo's curse originates from the guilt she feels from her mother's murder and from the trauma of her mother's haunting. Yukiyo's murders of the inhabitants of the apartment are a post-death attempt to please her mother. The investigator of the curse, Mariko, attempts to end it by promising to be the caretaker of apartment, to maintain the sanctity of the familial home for both Yukiyo and her mother. This obviously does not work as Mariko too is thrown from the balcony. The interesting aspect of this film is that not only is Yukiyo the originator of the curse but also its curse. Abused women litter the screen of Asian horror and the lack of power these women have in life is emphasised by the fact that their spirit is eternal and can never be silenced. J. McRoy writes that "repressed women must forever be acknowledged, their silenced voices perpetually recognized but never fully understood."[617]

The closest example of a parallel with western horror themes is the rape-revenge film, in which women are forced to gain justice for themselves after suffering abuse at the hands of usually a group of men. For example, *I Spit on Your Grave* follows the rape of a woman by a group of men and then follows her as she kills them all. Within the rape-revenge narrative, the woman does not die but her subsequent hunting of all those that hurt her is similar to the all-encompassing rage that the vengeful spirit unleashes in her attempt at avenge her untimely demise. Significantly, the presentation of these vengeful women is not tied to the monstrous-feminine. They are not evicted from the narrative for any length of time and they return in sequels. Instead these women are the creation of social and cultural changes, and the failure of those who try to placate them is a sign of the failure to fully comprehend their creation. The appearance of the ghost is never their own choice. Indeed the relevance of the term "monstrous-feminine" to analyses of Asian horror has been questioned. This is because these figures are never fully monstrous, "the female ghost alternates in her role and appearances between the monstrous and the feminine."[618] The film *Shutter,* discussed earlier, features a female ghost who is trying to warn Jane of Tun's actions that led to Natre's suicide. These

[617] J. McRoy, *Nightmare Japan*: *Contemporary Japanese Horror Cinema* (New York: Rodopi, 2008), 88
[618] S. Teo. *The Asian Cinematic* Experience (London: Routledge, 2013), 107

ghosts can kill indiscriminately, but they can be represented as both "abject and heroic."[619] This differs from the monstrous-feminine often depicted as an insatiable monster that wishes to devour all, for example the alien queen in *Aliens.* These women, on the other hand, appear as they do because of an excess of male violence or a rebellion against the injustices of male authority and as such are not locked into their destructive nature. Because of this they are not eradicated as they must stand as representatives of the unspoken monstrosity of abuse.

What is also significant about Asian horror, and Japanese horror specifically, is that while it is hard to find a hero therein, most of the characters who investigate and act in order to solve the mystery of the haunting are women. In *Ringu,* the mystery of the videotape is solved by a single mother, Reiko, who is also a journalist; in *Shutter* it is the character of Jane who finds the photographic evidence of Tun's part in the suicide of Natre; Rika in *Ju-on* also is the investigator of the cursed house. In *Ringu,* Reiko even goes so far as to search Sadako's remains in the hope that that is what the girl is really looking for through her unstoppable killing force.[620] While the attempts to placate the spirit never work for very long, the people seeking to do so are the only ones who either believe in the curse or attempt to end it. As we have seen, then, Asian horror is a very female-centred space, the films take place within domestic settings and the main antagonist and protagonist roles are filled by women.

Another significant aspect of Japanese horror is the insistence on technology as a conduit for these spirits. In *Ringu* Sadako is able to persist because of a videotape that, in an abstract way, tells the story of what happened to her. A person who watches this film will have only seven more days to live, the only way out of this is to have someone else watch it within that period so the curse is passed on. In *One Missed Call* people receive a phone call they place to themselves dated a week in the future, and the phone call is their own death. In *Kairo* a curse travels through the internet, highlighting the isolation from people that technology causes even though we can keep in touch like never before. Throughout *Kairo* the world becomes emptier and emptier, demonstrating an apocalyptic theme as the curse takes people en masse. This is depicted through the use of colour and as the film progresses the world is left with a greyish green colour as if "technology were somehow responsible for sucking the life out of nature."[621] Modernity emerges here a source of horror, the constant change and growth of

[619] Ibid.
[620] J. McRoy, *Nightmare Japan*: *Contemporary Japanese Horror Cinema* (New York: Rodopi, 2008, 83.
[621] C. Balmain, *Introduction to Japanese Horror Film* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2008), 185.

technology provides Japanese horror with a conduit through which old folk tales and stories can be regenerated and applied to a new generation. "Death, both symbolic and literal, is omnipresent, as the eventual outcome of technological progress."[622] Technological advances are both becoming a fixture of daily lives as well as a threat and a departure from the past. Japanese horror explores wide and varied encompassing themes but is characterised by a sense "of technological paranoia evident everywhere from the telephone and television horror of *Ring* to the murderous chip inserted in the skulls of contestants in *Battle Royale* [2000]*."*[623] Although *Battle Royale* will not be discussed in this chapter it is interesting to note that no matter what the individual themes of Japanese horror are, technology plays an important part. Among the particular cultural qualities that imbue Japanese horror, like technology, is also the way the spirits of the dead are omnipresent.[624] This makes any ending one of inevitable death even if characters make it to safety because the spirits of the dead are never far from the material world.

Many of these Japanese horror films have been remade by American filmmakers and studios. The significance of this is that, even though, as Wetmore states, the "technoghosts haunt the society that created them,"[625] they resonate within other cultures as well. Technology has become an integral part of society with many people connected to some type of electronic device most of the time. Certain styles change, but the overarching themes remain within the remakes. For example, the remake of *Kairo,* titled *Pulse* (2006)*,* still focusses on personal relationships and connections being interrupted by technology, but Wetmore notes how it is more "concerned with how our communicative technology can also be used to hurt us: cyber stalking, identity theft, and illegally downloading music."[626] This diverges from the Japanese original, at least partly, in that it has used the same trope, the haunted and cursed internet, to deal with current social and cultural concerns of an American society. Though these films have deep roots in folklore, history and a specific culture, they reflect a universal fear in this ever-growing, ever-changing world shown through the success of these films in western markets. Furthermore, the remaking of Japanese titles that feature technology heavily as the

[622] Ibid., 187.
[623] A. Phillips and J. Stringer, "Contemporary Japanese horror" in *The Cinema Book*, 5th ed., ed. Pam Cook. (London: British Film Institute, 2007), 241.
[624] Ibid., 243.
[625] K. J Wetmore jr, "Technoghosts and Culture Shocks: Socioculatural Shifts in American Remakes of J-Horror," *Postscript*, 28, no.2 (2009), 72.
[626] Ibid.

portal for the spirits, have been remade with no changes to the technological aspects of their plots. This is the case of *Kairo/Pulse*, but also *Ringu* and *One Missed Call*

Korean horror film differs slightly from Japanese. Though objects again feature as conduits of evil, such as the videotape that Sadako moves through, Korean films tend to highlight objects that connote femininity. An example of this is *The Red Shoes* (2005). The film is a re-telling of the Hans Christian Anderson fairy tale of the same name, as well as a famous Hollywood film in the 1940s. The original fairy tale tells the story of a young girl whose adoptive mother buys her pair of red shoes; the red shoes begin to move by themselves but do not pose any harm. After the girl goes to a party however the shoes are cursed and she is condemned to dance forever. She comes across an executioner whom she begs to cut off her feet. He does so but the shoes with her amputated feet in them continue to dance.[627] In the Korean horror film version, the red shoes are a pair of hot pink pumps, and the reason for the change of colour is related to translation between English and Korean. *The Red Shoes*, in all of its incarnations, have always been *The Pink Shoes* in Korea.[628] These shoes are of course cursed, the shoes create jealousy and greed in those that hold them. They also result in death. Hyun-suk Seo sees the object horror film as being particularly connected to female sexuality, "even though the sexual level of the female characters' actions is not rendered manifest, it is always an integral part of the entire network of jealousy, concealment, betrayal, and murder, in which every character participates in actively and secretly."[629] These shoes are desired by any female character who comes into contact with them, a desire that manifests itself in an obsession to obtain them, regardless of the cost. This is not seen as a positive thing as much of the plot line of these films revolves around a similar misogynist spectacle like that which can be seen in the women-in-prison films of the 1970s.[630] Women-in-prison films are loosely defined as:

> a young woman either participated unknowingly in a crime; or participated in a crime because she was madly in love with a man...She is sent to prison. There she

[627] H. C. Anderson, *The Red Shoes* (1845; reis., Warwickshire: Pook Press, 2015).
[628] H. Seo, "The Unoscure Object of Desire and Horror: On Some Uncanny Things in Recent Korean Horror Films" in *Horror to the Extreme: Changing Boundaries in Asian Cinema*, ed. J. Choi and M. Wada- Marciano (Hong Kong: Hong Kong UP, 2009), 164.
[629] Ibid., 167.
[630] Ibid., 175.

encounters women (often in the requisite shower scene) who challenge her, try to seduce her, and make her life miserable.[631]

These films are often read as misogynistic because of the spectacle they make of the women who feature in them. That is how Hyun-suk Seo works in his comparison between them and *The Red Shoes.* An oppositional reading of the film is that it is a sign of women's competition with each other, for the objects within these films make the women that possess them special in some way. This causes envy and thus leads the women to "destroy anything that emerges from their undifferentiated condition."[632] In *The Red Shoes* a friend steals the shoes from Sun-jae, and this friend is also responsible for continually putting her down like her ex-husband is said to have done. She tries to keep Sun-jae down and prevents her from regaining her self-confidence and esteem. Yet where Hyun-suk Seo sees misogyny there could easily be seen as a filmic visualisation of the relationships that women have with each other. *The Red Shoes* is an exploration of a perception that the relationship that women have with each other is always based on envy and jealousy. This is by no means a heart-warming exploration about the love between women but it does highlight how women, regardless of the culture in which they live, are often pitted against each other to the detriment of everyone.

In an interesting parallel to *Scream,* Korean horror consciously appeals to teenage girls, frequently "dealing with problems that are pertinent to teenage girls and by evoking an overall mood rather than emotions."[633] The plots of these films focus on interactions, and the key to the vanquishing of the spirit or the temporary appeasement of the spirit is often the connection that the protagonist can make with the spirits. Many Korean horror films take place in high school and, as with the metaphors deployed in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Scream*, "the supernatural, fantastic elements of horror cinema can appeal to teenagers by providing symbolic solutions to teen problems and thus vicarious pleasures to teenage audiences."[634] The focus on interactions between characters and in particular female characters is significant in that the films not only deal with the creation of horror but also

[631] J. Mayne. *Framed: Lesbians, Feminists and Media Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 115.
[632] L. Irigaray, *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, trans., C. Burke and G. C. Gill (New York: Cornell UP, 1993), 103.
[633] J. Choi, "A Cinema of Girlhood: *Sonyeo* sensibility and the Decorative impulse in the Korean Horror Cinema" in *Horror to the Extreme: Changing Boundaries in Asian Cinema*, ed. J. Choi and M. Wada- Marciano (Hong Kong: Hong Kong UP, 2009), 43.
[634] Ibid., 44.

with issues that pertain to everyday life through themes of death, envy, competition, distrust, betrayal and isolation between women. These films have served as a counterbalance to "trends towards more male-orientated genres."[635] More male-oriented films in Korea tend to focus on an adolescent male protagonist and "tend to underscore masculinity and portray the pursuit of and suffering from a distorted ego ideal."[636] Female-centred horror films, as has been mentioned above, are more likely to focus on emotional, supernatural aspects and on the characters interactions with each other. In a way these horror films rely more on drama than on action. This shows a distinct separation from other horror genres that, with the exception of the *Scream* series and the slasher revival of the nineties, have tended to focus on the male audience member as the ideal target for horror films.

French horror films have developed out of a tradition of "outstanding individual horror films, normally by directors who did not specialise in the field."[637] Examples include work by Henri-Georges Clouzot's *The Fiends* (1955), *The Raven* (1943) as well as Georges Franju's *Eyes Without a Face* (1959). These films "unequivocally draw on horror conventions."[638] Yet French cinema does not have a tradition of horror as a genre and, as such, films that have been classified as horror have gained attention through their association with well-known directors. Horror outside of these individual films and directors has been "conceived as a contagion, something to be suspicious of, but which can (perhaps should) be neutralized or appropriated by means of art cinema."[639] The interest and the production of horror film outside the fantasy and art cinema has increased in recent years in France, and "one possible reason for this increased presence on French screens may be a new realism in the settings of horror and fantasy, allowing for easier audience identification and an augmented sense of topicality and relevance."[640] The lack of history surrounding the horror film in France has led to the absence of the development of subgenres, such as the slasher, until recently. As Emily Brick writes "the absence of the slasher also meant an absence of the 'final girl' as a common

[635] Ibid., 43.
[636] Ibid.
[637] P. Allmer, E. Brick and D. Huxley, "French Horror Cinema" in *European Nightmares: Horror Cinema in Europe since 1945*, ed. P. Allmer, E. Brick and D. Huxley (New York: Wallflower Press, 2012), 91.
[638] Ibid.
[639] G. Austin, "Contemporary French Horror Cinema: From Absence to Embodied Presence" in *A Companion to Contemporary French Cinema,* eds. A. Fox, M. Marie, R. Moine & H. Radner (West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons, 2015), 276.
[640] Ibid., 277.

narrative figure."[641] However French cinema "has always offered elegant film noir and thrillers with strong female characterization,"[642] and in 2003 France had international success with the release of *Haute Tension*, or *High Tension*, also referred to as *Switchblade Romance.* This film took the basic premise of the slasher film of a large man with a knife stalking and killing the residents of a house and gave the narrative as well as the character of the Final Girl a new twist.

Haute Tension (2003) plays with the idea of the Final Girl. This film is part of the new French Extremism, a movement began in the early 2000s and chiefly characterised by "extreme sex, dystopia and violence."[643] Films that have been categorised as such are associated with "transgressive narratives that combine violence with extreme sexuality…or pornography....as well as shocking acts such as rape, necrophilia, cannibalism, and self-mutilation."[644] *High Tension* is on the tame side of the New French Extremism movement, one "united by a desire to blur boundaries: between auteur and popular cinema, good and bad taste, high and low culture."[645] The film thrives on blurring boundaries: between self and other, love and hate, masculine and feminine. Marie and Alex are two best friends who are on their way to Alex's parents' home. The night they arrive a serial killer murders Alex's family and Alex is taken by the killer. Marie attempts to save Alex repeatedly but is unable to do so until a climactic fight between Marie and the killer. As she tries to free Alex once more, Alex seems terrified of Marie. Earlier in the film a shop clerk had been murdered, and as the police investigate a security tape reveals that Marie was the killer and also of Alex's family. The film plays with preconceived ideas of the Final Girl. Marie is instantly recognisable as the Final Girl. She is boyish, she is the focal point within the film and it is through her that the audience first see the killer.[646] The twist at the end reveals how misleading these preconceptions can be for the audience. It is in this way that *High Tension* both capitalises on the idea of the Final Girl and rewrites it in the same motion. The killer is both; this can be

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[641] E. Brick, "The French Rape-Revenge Film" in *European Nightmares: Horror Cinema in Europe since 1945*, ed. P. Allmer, E. Brick and D. Huxley (New York: Wallflower Press, 2012), 99.
[642] J. Francis jr, *Remaking Horror: Hollywood's Reliance on Scares of Old* (North Carolina: McFarland and Co, 2013), 167.
[643] G. Vincendeau, "The New Lower Depths: Paris in French Neo Noir," in *Neo Noir*, eds., M. Bould, K. Glitre & G. Tuck. (New York: Columbia UP, 2009), 105.
[644] G. Vincendeau, "The New French Extremism" in *The Cinema Book*, 5th ed., ed. Pam Cook. (London: British Film Institute, 2007), 205.
[645] Ibid., 205.
[646] C.J. Clover. *Men, Women and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film.* (New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1993), 44-45.

seen also as a continuation of the murderous Surviving Woman who is depicted within the films *Shrooms* and *American Mary* discussed in chapter four.

Another aspect of this film that mirrors conventional horror films is that even though Alex manages to defeat Marie, she is not free from her. Not only has Alex lost her whole family to the homicidal urges of Marie but also once she has defeated her, Marie's menace prevails. The closing scene of *High Tension* shows Marie behind a one-way mirror, Alex watches and asks the attendant if Marie can see her, and as she is answered with a no, Marie reaches for her. Like the conventional Surviving Woman, Alex is not free from the threat posed by the Surviving Woman. This is shown through the physical marks they bear and the fact that they know, through their encounter with the abject just how fine the line is between life and death, the human and the monstrous.

High Tension also harks back to the idea of the killer caught in a psychosexual fury. Like Norman Bates whose own sexual desires are punished by his internalisation of his mother, the idea of repressed sexual desire erupting in a fury of bloodshed is prominent in *High Tension*.[647] Instead of a male in the grip of his mother, Marie's externalisation of her unrequited love for Alex divides her personality between her actions as the male killer and her true physical self, which she places in the role of rescuer. When she is committing her murderous deeds she is in the guise of man and when she "fights" him she alternates between the two. Like Norman Bates she is punishing herself for her sexual urges towards Alex. When her attempts to rescue are thwarted because Alex is aware that she is the killer the line between the two blur. When Alex stabs Marie and runs, Marie stands up pulling the knife and the killer half has completely taken over her at this point and she is only shown to the audience as the male half. Like Norman's mother in the closing scenes of *Psycho*, Alex has been repelled by the object of her love and as such her only recourse is to fully embrace her homicidal urges. This aspect of the film is also an interesting reinterpretation of Williams' theory of the woman and the monster in classic horror sympathising through recognising the difference that they both represent in comparison to the norm, male figure.[648] In contrast to Williams' theory of identification, shared through the gaze, in this film the monster and the

[647] C.J. Clover. *Men, Women and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film.* (New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1993), 27.
[648] L. Williams, "When The Woman Looks" in *The Dread Of Difference*, ed. B. K. Grant (Austin: Texas UP, 1996), 20-21.

human reside in the one body. The audience of *High Tension* are treated to a very subjective view of what is actually happening in the film. The audience are aligned with Marie and as such are unaware of her split personality. Marie is not just aligned with "with the very boys she fears or rejects, not to mention the killer himself,"[649] she is actually the killer. "The spectator is surprised and confused at first, realising the Marie has a split personality and that the second self of this slender, delicate girl is portrayed by a disgusting, brutish, stocky man."[650] As with traditional slasher films the audience are shown aspects of the film from the perspective of both the killer and the Final Girl, but ultimately viewers take the side of the Final Girl.[651] Unlike traditional slasher films however here the audience are not allowed to separate from the perspective of the killer, as the killer and the Final Girl are within one body. The effect of this is that the audience cannot switch points of identification and are complicit with the killer's actions for the entirety of the narrative even when they are cheering the Final Girl on.

Livid (2011) is a French take on the vampire myth. The film centres on a young woman, Lucy, who is training to be an aged care nurse. While being shown the ropes by her supervisor, Mrs Wilson, she is taken to an old mansion where a Mrs Jessel lies in a coma. Mrs Jessel was once a great ballet teacher, people would send their children to her and pay for the privilege, and rumour has it that somewhere within the mansion there is a treasure to be found. Lucy tells her boyfriend about this and Lucy, her boyfriend and his brother decide to go in search of the treasure. They break into the mansion and find a room where a girl is standing on a pedestal. The girl is assumed to be Mrs Jessel's mute daughter Anna. As they place a key that they have taken from Mrs Jessel's neck into the pedestal, Anna proceeds to spin like a mechanical ballerina. This awakens Mrs Jessel and triggers a series of flashbacks that reveal the true nature of the evil that resides in the house. Anna is revealed to have been a vampire in life, one with an uncontrollable thirst, who ate her mother's students. Anna now has been awoken and attempts to feed on Lucy, who fights back. Mrs Wilson has returned to the house and knocks Lucy out.

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[649] C.J. Clover. *Men, Women and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film.* (New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1993), 40.
[650] M. Hurst, "Subjectivity Unleashed: *Haute Tension*" in *European Nightmares: Horror Cinema in Europe since 1945*, ed. P. Allmer, E. Brick and D. Huxley (New York: Wallflower Press, 2012), 107
[651] C.J. Clover. *Men, Women and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film.* (New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1993), 45.

When she awakens she is strapped to a table and is being prepared for a ritual that will place her soul into Anna's body and Anna's soul into Lucy's. The ritual is successful but Mrs Jessel does not receive what she had wished, instead of having a second attempt at creating an obedient daughter she now has two very angry young women to contend with. Her helper, Mrs Wilson, is stabbed by Anna, as is Mrs Jessel. The two girls work together to free themselves from the two older women. The film ends with Anna and Lucy walking together in the sunlight, holding hands and they come to a cliff overlooking the ocean. They let go of each other and Anna floats into the sky, her old decaying flesh flaking off and leaving her reborn as she floats to freedom. These two young women come together because of the machinations of Anna's mother. Lucy was to be used as a chance for Mrs. Jessel to replace her failure of a daughter with a new version. The twist is that these two girls have no allegiance to the figure of the mother, as the following paragraph demonstrates. Mother within this narrative represents nothing but pain and loss.

Livid tells a story of young women who are hurt by their mothers. Lucy's mother is dead and she is struggling with being left behind, whereas, Anna has been broken, literally, by her mother's dominance. Mrs. Jessel ran a ballet studio and Anna feeds on a student causing Mrs. Jessel to fly into a rage as this is one of the restrictions that have been placed on Anna. Mrs. Jessel forces Anna to take part in a rigorous ballet routine. This can be read as punishment for disobeying her and an attempt at discipline. During this lesson Anna's mother breaks her spine. To restore her daughter to her position of grace and movement, Mrs Jessel attaches a clockwork spine to Anna's broken spine. This does not restore Anna to her former glory and she is placed on a pedestal, like a ballerina in a music box. When Lucy and Anna are swapped they bond with each other and become the conduits through which the other can be freed. Anna, in Lucy's body can now walk in the sun and has escaped the tyranny of her mother, whereas Lucy, in Anna's body, floats free from the world in which she has felt lost and alone since her mother's death. The sun functions in this vampire narrative as it does in most vampire narratives. Anna is shown in flashback running from the mansion only to be burnt by the sun. However, after their souls have been swapped, Lucy in Anna's body finds freedom in the sun.

Vampires traditionally function in horror narratives as representations of the aspect of the abject that is both repulsive and attractive. As Creed writes, the vampire "signifies perverse forms of sexual excess, it both repels and attracts; hence the protagonist (the desire of the

text) also desires what he/she fears."[652] This attraction ultimately elapses and the vampire must be destroyed. The abject functions in *Livid* not by placing all vampires as monstrous, but by examining their individual actions and deeds. Mrs. Wilson, who is human, is depicted as more monstrous than Anna. Anna and Lucy are connected within the narrative of *Livid,* but it is played out as one of acceptance and understanding. This reinterpretation of the connection between vampire and the potential victim is played out as a condition of shared victimhood, both Anna and Lucy have been victims of their mothers. The final scene does not have Anna ageing or dying in the traditional way of most vampire narratives, but taking off into the sky.

[REC] offers a Spanish take on the zombie movie and the film presents itself as a pseudo-documentary of a film crew doing a report on the night shift of the local fire stations. This film series is part of the found footage idea that creates the feeling of a "real" event through the use of hand held cameras and only allows the viewers to see whatever the wielder of the camera can see. Found footage films have taken off as a recent trend in film making, an attempt to make the experience of the film more "real." The first appearance of this narrative technique was seen in *The Blair Witch Project* (1999). Found footage is about challenging "our confidence that we know where the lines between fact and fiction lies."[653] Found-footage films emphasise the victim over the monster, "the screaming victim is, to be sure, nothing new to the genre, but it is a relatively recent development to make the victim the privileged horrific spectacle while keeping the monster almost totally offscreen."[654] Similar to the original slasher era that would reserve allowing the audience a complete look at the killer, the found footage film takes this to an extreme as "the display of the monster is even further marginalized."[655] Also drawing another parallel to the slasher film, found footage films rely on "a type of POV camerawork, the slasher genre primarily – almost exclusively – associates the subjective camera with the monster, while it is the protagonist or victim who wields the look (and the diegetic camera) in nearly all found footage horror films."[656] This style of filming locks the audience with the protagonist. Identification with the Final Girl

[652] B. Creed, *The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis*. (New York: Routledge, 1993), 85.
[653] A. Heller- Nicholas, *Found Footage Horror Film: Fear and the Appearance of Reality* (North Carolina: McFarland and Co, 2014), 4
[654] A. C. Hart, "Millenial Fears: Abject Horror in a Transnational Context" in *A Companion to the Horror Film,* ed. H. M. Benshoff (West Sussex: John Wiley & Son, 2014), 337
[655] Ibid., 337.
[656] Ibid., 338.

occurs through watching her objectively. The audience see how she is different from the others and how they are invited to identify with her because she has been singled out as someone of worth in the narrative. In found footage films, the audience identify with the protagonist because of the use of the diegetic camerawork. *[REC]* deploys these diegetic camera shots and it works through the use of documentary style filming, allowing the audience to see only what the main characters see.[657]

The film crews and a journalist, Angela, are called to a building where an old woman is trapped in her apartment. The police break into her apartment and are attacked by the old woman who bites one of them. The building is sealed off by military and then the rest of the film unfolds whilst the film crew records it all. Angela and the film crew are the centre of this film, and the camera follows her as she interviews people. The chaos increases as people get sick and more people get bitten. The first *[REC]* ends with Angela being dragged backwards, reaching for the camera. This follows a standard zombie apocalypse plot in that an uncontrollable virus or infection is trying to be contained and those who have been exposed to it are considered collateral damage. *[REC]* was later remade, in 2008, as *Quarantine.* The remake is essentially shot-for-shot and is "relatively indistinguishable beyond differences in language and culturally specific references."[658] The significance of the specific cultural traits of the *[REC]* series become more central in the third instalment.

REC3: Genesis (2012) diverges from the found footage style and highlights the cultural differences of the approach in this Spanish zombie film in comparison to American interpretations of the genre. The beginning of the film maintains this found footage characteristic, but quickly this dissolves into more traditional filming. The setting for this film is the wedding of Clara and Koldo. The film details the progression of their wedding and reception, which is brutally interrupted by a zombie outbreak. The newlyweds are separated during the chaos, and when they eventually make their way back to each other, after many encounters with zombies, Clara is bitten. Koldo cuts Clara's arm off in an attempt to stem the infection but this does not work and after one last kiss both are shot by military personnel trying to contain the situation.

[657] A. Heller- Nicholas, *Found Footage Horror Film: Fear and the Appearance of Reality* (North Carolina: McFarland and Co, 2014), 20.
[658] Ibid. 128.

What makes this film so significant is that not only is the zombie apocalypse likened to the plague that will destroy the world, but a priest is paramount in the salvation of the wedding guests. When Clara is separated from Koldo she is with the priest who performed their wedding ceremony, and he tells Clara that this is the end of time. The priest plays a significant role in that he uses the sound system of the venue to recite prayers that stop the infected people from attacking, or even moving. The exception is Koldo's grandfather because he is deaf and cannot hear the prayers. Most zombie films work on two principles: one that it is a virus and only an antivirus created by science can help, or two that it is the dead arisen and only not dying can save you. The priest in *REC3* reads Genesis from the bible and the zombies freeze in place. This is the key to stopping the zombies and it differs from the zombie apocalypse as a disease that can only be stopped by killing the infected and finding a cure. The *[REC]* series "is strongly imbued with aspects of Roman Catholicism, a predominant religion in Spain."[659] In contrast the *Quarantine* series removes the religious aspect of *[REC]* and resorts to a chemical and viral source for the zombies. As mentioned earlier the near shot-for-shot mirroring between *[REC]* and *Quarantine* implies that the premise of the film "is directly culturally translatable to American audiences."[660] The religious aspect of *[REC]* however is culturally specific to Spain.[661]

Moreover, "Spanish horror cinema often works to subvert gender norms at the level of representation,"[662] as seen in "the recurring figure of the female protagonist."[663] Angela in *[REC]* is strong and survives the zombies until the closing moments of the film. The representation of strong women continues in *[REC]3: Genesis.* The character of Clara is presented as tough. Unlike Clover's Final Girl, who is normally shown in high necked shirts and jeans, she is presented in full bridal dress for the entirety of the action. The dress plays a significant part in depicting Clara as a woman of action. In order to make herself more capable of fighting she cuts the dress with a chainsaw, revealing a red garter, a sign of femininity. Lingerie has very close ties to the representation of femininity. Laville writes that that silk and stockings in particular "are a remarkably fragile product, prone to frequent snags, sags, and ladders. It is this very fragility and delicacy that makes the stocking so

[659] Ibid., 186.
[660] Ibid.,187.
[661] Ibid., 187.
[662] I. Olney, "Spanish Horror Cinema" in *A Companion to the Horror Film,* ed. H. M. Benshoff (West Sussex: John Wiley & Son, 2014), 381
[663] Ibid.

symbolic of femininity."[664] Clara is clothed in her highest points of action in stockings and lace. Her clothes signify her femininity, but they do not deter her action. This shows a clear departure from the Final Girl who remained covered as a symbol of her masculinity. The exposure of her flesh would both leave her vulnerable and also reveal her more fully as a physical female, not the androgynous character that Clover depicts her as. The significance of both the wedding dress and the garter is that they associate femininity with strength. Clara belies Clover's assumption that the Final Girl must embrace the masculine in order to fight the killer.

REC3 also subverts the reading of lingerie as it is featured in film. Laville writes that stockings serve to "not only advertise the femininity of their wearer but also to enforce it" and that this served to show that the stockings would "not survive a hard day in a steel plant or coal mine."[665] The argument could be extended to the frilly and lacy material that Clara sports for the duration of *REC3*, as it shows that the material aspects of femininity do not serve to rob her of her abilities as a capable woman. The wedding dress and garter serve as a reminder that her day has been ruined.

The chainsaw could be interpreted as a phallic weapon. Clover proposes this in her reading of the character of Stretch whose moment of freedom, read as masculinisation, is shown through her escaping into the "sunshine, waving the buzzing chainsaw triumphantly overhead."[666] The splitting of Clara's dress extinguishes this potential reading. It is here that she attempts to rescue her husband and, to the backing track of a power ballad, she leads the charge against the zombies. When told that they should run Clara refuses and asserting that "this is my day" she charges the zombies. Clara is fully in the role of an enraged bride whose big day has been ruined. In this way she embodies the angry women explored in chapter four. She is enraged but this does not position her in the role of the masculine because her anger is generated through the day of her celebrating her love has been destroyed. Her link to the feminine is highlighted again when her high heel is used to pierce the eye of one of the zombies attempting to stop her from reaching Koldo and when Koldo tells her she would have made a wonderful mother. Any chance that Clara could have been read through a masculine Final

[664] H. Laville, "'Our Country Endangered by Underwear': Fashion, Femininity, and the Seduction Narrative in *Ninotchka* and *Silk Stockings*," *Diplomatic History*, 30, no. 4 (2006), 635.
[665] Ibid., 636.
[666] C.J. Clover. *Men, Women and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film.* (New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1993), 38

Girl framework is underscored by these moments played out at the height of the action. This is a love story told through the medium of a zombie film. This film does not have a happy ending with the newlyweds dying together, but they fulfil the promise they make to each other when they reunite, the promise that they will never separate again in the most final of ways.

Scandinavian horror has received very little critical engagement, as such my analysis within the following paragraphs will consist of close reading of the films. The *Cold Prey* films highlights the creation of monstrosity on society. The killer of *Cold Prey* is not some psychopath bent on the mindless destruction of people with no reason for his actions, buried alive as a child by his parents. Rather he is like the vengeful woman of Japanese horror, a reminder of the cruelty of the world and the lack of justice he was given. However unlike the spirits of Japanese horror he did not die in the burial. Like the killers of standard slasher films his face is covered by goggles and a scarf. In this film, five friends go on a snowboarding adventure that results in one of them, Morten, breaking his leg. They then seek shelter in an abandoned hotel. Like a standard slasher film, WHO? kills the group one by one until only Jannicke is left. Injured during her struggles with him, she passes out as he is dragging her to her burial site she wakes up. As they fight Jannicke unmasks him, there is a moment in this scene, just before she strikes the killing blow when she realises he is human. This is where *Cold Prey* differs from standard slashers, for it functions on the basis that there are no real monsters other than those created by society. Although this moment does not stop Jannicke from striking him down, this nevertheless points to a clear deviation from mainstream horror. Even though the killers within *Scream* are human this fact is not lingered on. Opposed to this is the moment that Jannicke acknowledges the human nature of her attacker, their eyes meet and this acknowledgement is greeted by the appearance of shock on Jannicke's face. *Cold Prey* has a third instalment which focuses on the back story of the killer highlighting his origins not in the supernatural but as a boy who was horribly mistreated and grew up to be a murderer. The human nature of the murderer is similar to the depiction of the killers in *Scream*. Where it differs is that it gives emotional depth to the killer, reflected in his mistreatment, and attempted murder by his parents.

Cold Prey II follows on directly from the events of the first film, Jannicke is rescued and the bodies of her friends and killer are found and taken to the same hospital in which she has been placed. During the stripping of the bodies in preparation for autopsy the killer comes

back to life. He did not die, his body, because of the extreme cold of the abyss in which Jannicke pushed him, went into a kind of hibernation. The doctors resuscitate him fully and Jannicke must once again fight him. This is not due to some supernatural regeneration, as in the *Friday the 13th* films, but explained by simple physiology and what happens to the human body in the extreme cold. It is explained also by glimpses into the killer's childhood the audience are given in the first film. His stepfather had pushed him into an abyss when he was a boy and as such his body has learnt how to cope with extreme cold.

Jannicke herself is an interesting character in that she is the most capable of them all, but unlike the capability shown by Final Girls this is not explained away through recourse to masculinity or her being an exception. When Morten breaks his leg it is Jannicke who glues his wounds closed and creates a splint after snapping the bone back into place, showing a good knowledge of first aid and an ability to handle the sight of blood. She does not adhere to the characteristics of a Final Girl discussed throughout this thesis. She is not held apart from those around her, is in an established relationship and is the object of affection for another character. She is also not undermined by any of the male characters. This lack of challenge to her capability is not carried on in to *Cold Prey II*. Here Jannicke and a doctor, Camilla, are constantly undermined by the chief doctor, Hermann. Jannicke is treated like a hysterical, traumatised woman, much like Ripley in *Aliens,* and her knowledge of the danger is denied veracity.

Jannicke and Camilla are the only survivors of *Cold Prey II,* and like Sidney and Gale of *Scream,* they work together in order to survive. After Camilla's partner is killed, Jannicke rushes to comfort her, during this moment the killer disappears. She follows him, even after Camilla tries to dissuade her, and lays a trap for him. Unfortunately, she fails to stay awake whilst waiting for him and is only saved by the intervention of Camilla. They work together to kill him, and this film fails to excuse female violence as something exceptional. Rather, women are capable of protecting themselves and of wielding violence for the sake of their survival.

The fact that these films resist any supernatural explanation for the monstrosity, that he is not inherently evil but created that way through the evil of others, that Jannicke is strong without being undermined in any major way or hindered in her heroism by standard ideas of masculinity and femininity point out a new direction for the slasher film. Combined with the

other women looked at throughout this thesis, Jannicke provides another example of a breaking away from the masculine Final Girl of traditional slasher films. On the face of it, it holds a great deal of similarities with classic slashers like *Halloween* but it plays with this familiarity by altering things slightly and by calling attention to our expectations and then subverting them in subtle ways, drawing it closer to the self-reflexive style of *Scream*. These films hold a lot of similarities with *Scream* particularly the closing scenes of *Cold Prey II* where Jannicke picks up a shotgun to deliver one more shot to the killer, Camilla tries to point out that he is dead so Jannicke's actions are over the top, to which Jannicke replies "I have killed him before," the scene ends with her pointing the shotgun at the camera and then the blast. Like Sidney, Jannicke takes no chances calling attention to the horror trope of the killer who rises for one last fright. Unlike *Scream*, however, the *Cold Prey* films do not have recourse to humour but embrace a dark and threatening mood that is in contrast to the snow covered whiteness of many of its scenes.

Following on from the re-telling of the slasher film within *Cold Prey,* the Austrian film *Dead in 3 Days* (2006), follows a similar trajectory of *I Know What You Did Last Summer* (1997). A group of friends receive text messages on the day of their high school graduation, the text message reads "in three days you'll be dead." The film's plot line is almost a mirror image of *I Know What You Did Last Summer* where the group of friends receive letters with the sentence "I know what you did last summer." The past deed they committed now haunting them was the hit-and-run murder of a pedestrian. Just as the teenagers in *I Know What You Did Last Summer* are punished for a crime in their past so are the group of teenagers in *Dead in 3 Days*. This film chooses for its victims a significant time of their lives in order to highlight that the beginning of their adult lives could also be the end of their lives. Like a traditional slasher a special day is chosen to highlight the threat. Unlike the group in *I Know* who had a year before vengeance was wrought upon them, the group in *Dead in 3 Days* were children when the act that they become punished was committed. While this film does not deviate much from the second wave of slasher films produced in the 1990s by American filmmakers, the fact that the same plot line, with a little bit of the influence of Asian film thrown in (the warning of impending doom does come through the phone lines rather than in letters bringing in the technophobia that is frequently present in Asian horror), is easily transferred to an Austrian town. In a film made by Austrian filmmakers, it speaks to local enduring fears and issues. These are the fear of a past deed never truly being buried, the fear

of being hunted in the place you should feel safest and the fear of bodily disintegration are all fears that jump across national boundaries and cultural distinctions.

The clear influence of slasher films on this Austrian film is also evident in the casting of a female killer. Like Mrs. Vorhees in the first *Friday the 13th* the killer of *3 Days* is the mother of the boy that was accidently killed by the group, also she remains dead at the end of *Dead in 3 Days*. Both *Cold Prey* and *Dead in 3 Days* demonstrate Altmann's Semantic/Syntactic approach to genre. These films feature definable semantic aspects of the slasher genre, such as "common traits, attitudes, characters, shots, locations, sets and the like"[667] while differing with how they are arranged within the narrative and how the film alters familiar traits which is the syntactic aspects of the genre. The realism in *Cold Prey* invades *Dead in 3 Days* in its refusal to explain away the villain with recourse to the supernatural. The villain of *Dead in 3 Days* remains dead, her son does not return from the dead to then revenge his mother. What is interesting about these two takes on the slasher formula is that realism is important to the fear they create. The fact that the "monster" of these movies is as human as his or her victims imbues the narratives with a realism that is lacking in many of the traditional slashers. The traditional slasher film imbued their killers with a supernatural ability to survive many mortal injuries. The American slasher films of the 1990s, on the other hand, "go out of their way to demonstrate they are simply disturbed humans."[668] The human nature of the killer brought about a recognition "that men with knives could indeed bring about a great deal of horror."[669] These films teach that human beings are scarier than any monster has the potential to be. As Wetmore writes about the nineties slasher revival and the killers that feature in them, "unlike Jason, Freddy and Michael, when these killers are themselves killed, they stay dead.[670]" While the influence of the original era of slasher films can be seen in many of these films, they actually provide a combination of both the original and the revival era of slashers. The changes in settings and the cultural inflections that these films have serve to highlight the influences as well as influence the genre in turn.

These films show us is not only that cultural issues pervade the cinema screen but that certain horror tropes do not remain static. With each new incarnation they alter bit by bit. Films of a

[667] R. Altmann, "A Semanitic/Syntactic Approach to Film Genre," *Cinema Journal,* 23, no. 3, (1984), 10.
[668] K. J. Wetmore *Post 9/11 Horror In America Cinema* (New York: Continuum, 2012), 194.
[669] Ibid.,200.
[670] Ibid., 194.

certain country do not operate in a bubble but influence each other. As Wee writes, the horror film is "a genre predisposed towards the articulation and exploration of existing cultural and social concerns."[671] Insofar as each culture experiences different social and cultural upheaval and threats at different times the horror film in each country appears differently from another country. Horror films can be read as representative of real fears made extreme. The image of woman in the horror film is, as a result of this constant reaction by horror film makers to cultural and social issues, diverse and complex. There are many ways in which women play a part of the narrative of horror. Women feature as the Surviving Woman, as this thesis has demonstrated, but also as victims, monsters and as sympathetic vengeful ghosts. This wide proliferation of women on screen has altered the way in which women can be read as either victim, monster or masculine Final Girl.

[671] V. Wee. "Patriarchy and the Horror of the Monstrous-Feminine," *Feminist Media Studies,* 11, no. 2. (2014), 155.

Conclusion:
The Sun Will Rise

"I wanna know where they keep the hardware in this dump. I want chainsaws and big-ass knives and I want them now."

- Vicki Summers
The Final Girls (2015)

This thesis has analysed the changing role of the Final Girl and her evolution to Surviving Woman within the horror genre. It has explored her beginnings in the traditional slasher period, to the appearance of the Surviving Woman across a range of horror subgenres. Throughout the decades the Final Girl has been on a journey from her alignment with the male audience and the performance of 'masculine,' to representing, through the Surviving Woman, the active, angry figure who is more aligned with the 'feminine' or 'feminist.'

Although other critics have analysed Clover's Final Girl theory, as explored in chapter one of this thesis, none have attempted to refresh the theory for contemporary film or to explore the Surviving Woman as the evolution of the Final Girl. The figure of the active woman survivor is still significant within the horror genre, and the changes that have occurred are indicative of the changing role of women on the screen and social changes impact on gender roles. During the writing of this thesis a special anniversary edition of *Men, Women and Chainsaws* has been released. Clover, in her new preface, takes issue with the interpretation of the Final Girl as a hero figure within the slasher film. She writes: "as a sketch, at least, the Final Girl does look something like a female hero."[672] She goes on to say that this is only a shallow reading of the character. Clover sees the Final Girl as either "tortured survivor" or "given the element of last minute luck (she happens, in her flailing, on a cup of hot coffee, or some other such item, which she throws in her assailant's eyes), 'accidental survivor'."[673] For Clover, "to imagine that her, and our, experience of the film reduces to that last-minute reversal is to truly miss the point."[674] Fear and pain, Clover states, are the point of these films, not the heroics of the key actor of the

[672] C. J Clover, *Men, Women and Chainsaws*, 2nd edition (New Jersey: Princeton UP, 2015), x.
[673] Ibid.
[674] Ibid., x-xi.

narrative.[675] One of the aims of this thesis has been to examine the Surviving Woman through a lens of heroism.

Clover's denial of the heroic aspect of the Final Girl is illuminating. My thesis has been focused on displaying the character traits of the Surviving Woman as a hero. She risks her life when she does not need to, she protects those weaker than her and she goes to great lengths to protect the world. These are all heroic traits. Horror film's treatment of heroism is obviously different given the claustrophobic nature of horror. By this I mean the small scale, individual emphasis of horror and how it constructs heroism on the micro rather than the macro level. Regardless of the setting the Surviving Woman combats a threat to the world and as such deserves the title of hero.

The aim of this thesis has been to open the figure of the Final Girl to a lengthy examination in order to re-evaluate the characteristics of this figure in relation to contemporary horror films. As this thesis has demonstrated there have been criticism and challenges to certain aspects of Clover's theory, but a re-writing of this character has not been produced since the release of her study in 1992. Film is a dynamic and ever-changing medium that is influenced by itself, theory and changes in technology and society. The thesis has sought to update this character and create a new one, but never fixed, detailing as she is presented in films. This began with the changes to the Final Girl in the mid-1990s to her evolution to the Surviving Woman from films released in 2000-2015. The Final Girl has almost disappeared from contemporary horror films, with the emphasis now being placed on female characters in horror films demonstrating more heroism and having a more action based role. It also aimed to create a more female-centric character who is aligned more with the feminine and who managed to stay alive and defeat the killer without recourse to the masculine. This thesis has not attempted to lock the Surviving Woman into a type, or wave, of feminism, nor has it made claims that contemporary horror is feminist. Instead, this thesis has aimed to show how aspects of feminism, particularly the feminist interpretations of the female action heroes of the 1990s, has influenced the development of the Surviving Woman and how this character can be read as embodying aspects of a range of feminisms'.

[675] Ibid.

The first chapter of this thesis looked at the development and criticisms of Clover's Final Girl theory. It began by examining the details of Clover's theory of the Final Girl, as well as examining Vera Dika's own analysis of the genre and how their interpretation of the gendered function of the Final Girl complimented one other. Much of the criticism of Clover's argument lay with her insistence of a male audience and her refusal to allow women as women to have any agency within their narrative. Many of the differing views of this character challenged Clover's idea of masculinity, her adherence to the gender binary, her denial of the castrating aspect of the Final Girl and also her limited and selective choice of films.

Chapter two explored the changing role of the abject in contemporary horror. It drew on the theories of Kristeva and Deleuze. It aimed at reinterpreting the abject as not just something that is perceived as negative, but as something that can give power to the Surviving Woman. The idea of the abject as represented through crime and betrayal was also explored. This aspect of the abject has only recently begun to be represented as part of the horror film and its depiction of the abject. This chapter also explored how ideas of 'becoming' help remove the Surviving Woman from the feminine/masculine dichotomy and frame her in terms of difference instead of opposition.

The third chapter continued the idea of the abject as a positive force through examining how *Alien*, *Resident Evil* and the television series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* depict the abject as a source of power, similar to that of a mutation within traditional superhero stories. These superhero surviving women also refute the isolation of Clover's Final Girl. This chapter explored a main aspect of Clover's theory, the view that the Final Girl stands apart from other girls. The women discussed within this chapter have significant relationships with other women, these friendships play an important role in the way these women enact heroism. This chapter also looked at how these women operate within a framework of a feminist ethics of care. This is represented through their heroic deeds being influenced by their personal relationships with those whom they love. Interconnectedness was posited as an essential part of the Surviving Woman.

This interconnectedness as a key trait of the Surviving Woman was carried into chapter four of this thesis. The Final Girl is not characterised as displaying much emotion. In Clover's theory she is only discussed with the of fear being her only emotion. The Surviving Woman

displays anger, demonstrates love and grieves. This display of emotion is connected to the relationships the Surviving Woman has, but it is also used as part of the identification process. As this chapter discussed, affect is used to pull the audience into identifying with the Surviving Woman. The audience see her grief at the loss of her friends, they are shown her love for her children and her anger at the threat the killer poses. Anger in the character of the Surviving Woman is directed towards the misogyny of the killer. As this chapter shows, the Surviving Woman does not necessarily have to kill her attacker in order to escape, but killing him is often triggered in these situations through his use of derogatory, female-specific language.

Chapter five steps away from laying out the traits of the surviving woman and engages with representations of women in the national cinemas of Australia, Asia, France, Spain, Norway and Austria. This chapter was to show how the figure of the Surviving Woman, or the Final Girl, is not universal, however, this does not mean that women are absent from representation in the horror films of these individual nations. Where the character of the surviving woman does appear, this chapter has compared them to the depiction of the character in American horror films.

These chapters have all highlighted an aspect of the Surviving Woman that pulls her away from the Final Girl and the masculine implications of this character. This has been done through examining critiques of Clover, exploring the abject, the importance of emotion in the construction of the Surviving Woman and how women function in a range of different cultural arenas. The thesis has engaged with film theory and feminist theory in the construction of this character, as well as engaging with the visual aspects of horror through discussion of special effects.

The topic of women in horror films is extensive, as chapter five showed, and as such aspects of the genre and the representation of gender within it have been largely ignored. Many areas require future research, one of importance is the rise of the male surviving figure who seems to be gendered feminine in a twist on the Final Girl of the original slasher era. Other areas that have received some critical attention in recent years but are still relatively untouched are: the female spectator and their engagement with the Surviving Woman and the increasing presence of mothers as Surviving Woman. This thesis has also focused solely on Clover's chapter "Her Body, Himself." Other aspects of Clover's work need to be re-examined in light

of transformations in representations of women throughout horror genres. There has been a resurgence in the Possession film which should be examined with respect to Clover's chapter on the subgenre. Also, her examination of the rape-revenge genre deserves revisiting, as this has had a renaissance within contemporary film, this particular endeavour was outside the scope of this work.

As this thesis was coming to an end a film called *The Final Girls* was released. This is a film about a group of young people who get sucked into a 1980s horror film *Camp Bloodbath.* This film-within-a-film is a reference to the campsite slasher film of which *Friday the 13th* and *Sleepaway Camp* belong. The film draws attention to the trope of the Final Girl. In an interview, one of the stars says "what's different about ours is that it's about women working together, and they actually like each other, and they support each other, and they fight for each other, and prevail because of one another."[676] This view points to the changes between Clover's Final Girl and how this character, as the Surviving Woman, is perceived within culture today. My thesis has not been about minimising the character of the Final Girl or Clover's contribution to feminist film studies, but to update this character so she does not get lost in the traits that define her as 'masculine,' to characterise her as more feminist inclined, to depict her as not isolated, but part of a community in which people support each other and protect one another.

Clover's Final Girl is eventually fixed within her masculine traits, the aim of this thesis has been to show that Surviving Woman will never be fixed. In order for her to survive and thrive she must be open and never complete. Becoming fixed in an identity leads to becoming obsolete, the figure of the Surviving Woman is a constant in the horror genre but, her identity shifts depending on her social climate and the state of horror at any given point. I call attention back to Wetmore's statement that horror is lacking in genuine Final Girls.[677] If he is looking, as I suspect he is, for the character who appeared in the slasher films of the 1970s and 1980s then he is right. That character no longer exists, she has been replaced by a new form. One who is angrier, more violent, more emotional, more interconnected with the world around her and more aligned with feminine than masculine aspects. The Surviving Woman is

[676] C. Collis, "Nina Dobrev Explains Why She's the Scariest Cast Member In *The Final Girls," Entertainment Weekly*, http://www.ew.com/article/2015/10/06/nina-dobrev-final-girls. Last accessed: 6 October 2015.
[677] K. J. Wetmore *Post 9/11 Horror In America Cinema* (New York: Continuum, 2012), 199.

present as mother, abused housewife, avenger, partner, friend and, in defiance of Clover's accidentally heroic Final Girls, hero.

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